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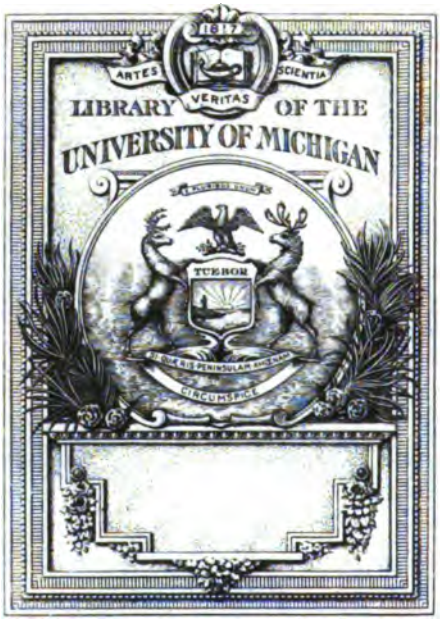

THE GIFT OF
Dean Joseph A. Bursley

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1902
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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

FRERE JACQUES

Translated into English by

MARY HANFORD FORD

VOLUME II

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CHAPTER I

Roulette

The hapless Adeline remained for a long time crushed under the weight of her anguish, and several hours after the scoundrelly Dufresne had taken his departure she was still seated, half-dressed, in a corner of her chamber, having no covering but the garment which she had hastily caught up and which she still held clasped to her bosom.

Then came daylight, with its stir and bustle after the silence of the night; the servants came and went about the house. Adeline rose at last and mechanically dressed herself, but fell again into the chair she had just left; she had no plans, no desires, no hope; she suffered, but she no longer thought.

As the morning wore on somebody knocked softly at the door; the sound aroused her from her extreme dejection; she recalled her ideas, but with the restoration of her faculties came a fuller, clearer recognition of her misfortune. She had been about to open the door, but she paused near it as a sudden thought struck her,—What if it were her husband?—how could she meet Edouard?

She felt that she could not endure his glance, that he would read her shame on her forehead. Poor Adeline, you tremble and blush for a crime of which you were the innocent victim; what a contrast to the conduct we witness every day in society!

A voice made itself heard; it was that of the chambermaid, who asked her mistress if she could come in; Adeline was reassured, and opened the door.

"I beg your pardon, madame," said the good girl, "but I was afraid you were ill; it is very late, and you did not ring for me, nor come down to breakfast?"

"Did you say it was late, Marie? Do you know if Monsieur Murville has come in?" inquired Adeline.

"Yes, madame; monsieur came in a short time ago; he went to his room for a moment, then he left again immediately."

"He has gone out again?—are you sure?" asked Adeline, anxiously.

"Yes, madame."

Adeline breathed more freely; she felt calmer; she felt relieved for the time being, for she dreaded now the presence of him for whom she had waited with such keen impatience some time previously.

Marie looked at her mistress, who was pale and changed; she sighed pityingly, for she thought

that Madame Murville's grief was caused by her husband's conduct. Servants are always the first censors of the conduct of their master; they see everything; nothing escapes them; he is not a hero to his valet, and few husbands are regarded as faithful by the servants.

"Has madame been ill in the night?" said Marie at last, in a low voice.

"No, no; nothing has ailed me," answered Adeline, blushing; then she hid her face in her handkerchief and sought to restrain her tears.

"Well, to be sure," continued kind-hearted Marie, "madame is wrong to grieve like that. Mercy! husbands are all the same; it is a fashion they have of running about; nobody can prevent them. But they cannot help it — and madame is so good."

"Leave me."

The servant was about to leave the room when Adeline recalled her.

"Marie, did any stranger come to the house last night?"

"A stranger? — last night?" The chambermaid looked at her mistress in astonishment, not understanding why she should ask such a question.

"Yes. Did you hear anyone knock? Did you hear any noise?"

"A knock in the night? Why, no one was out except monsieur, and he did not return. Thank God, all was quiet and everybody slept soundly;

and no wonder, for, after the bustle and confusion of the party the night before last, we were all very tired."

Adeline, who was now a little calmer, sent away the maid; she was sure that her dishonor was at least known to no one. She went to her little Ermance and took her in her arms, seeking to console herself with her daughter; an inner voice told her she was not guilty, and her spirit revived somewhat. Intention alone makes the crime; and the violent hate which Adeline felt for Dufresne she cherished with pleasure, feeling the greater her horror of him, the less criminal she was in her own eyes.

But an overwhelming thought struck her injured spirit. She remembered Dufresne's parting words: Edouard was in love with someone else, with whom he had passed that cruel night. He had come into the house, and had had no thought of coming to see her. This was the end: he had forgotten her; he was unfaithful. This certitude wrought poor Adeline's desolation, and deprived her of all hope and happiness.

Still dizzy, stunned by the effect of his day and night, Edouard had left Madame de Geran's dwelling to return to his own; but a feeling of shame, a secret remorse, prevented him from seeking his wife. One is entirely willing to excuse himself when one has been for a long time addicted to all the vices and habituated to braving public opinion;

but one cannot commit a single guilty action without experiencing an inward dissatisfaction, without hearing the disapproving voice of conscience. Edouard was still too much a novice in the path of vice not to feel the remorse which follows a first fault. A night passed away from his home, his wife deserted, a considerable sum lost in two days, — these were surely serious subjects on which to reflect. Edouard was like the greater part of those who rush headlong into folly; instead of resolving to be wiser and steadier in the future, he sought to stupefy himself, and gave himself with more frenzy than ever to all his passions, something like those unhappy people who commit suicide because they are afraid of the end of the world.

When with Dufresne, Edouard was certain to find diversion; he therefore betook himself to his friend's lodgings. He was alone, steeped in the most profound reflections. For the first time Murville began to be familiar with him; he felt more at ease with him since he had ceased to be a quiet family man. He shared entirely Dufresne's principles and his manner of seeing things, and all ceremony was of course banished between two such united friends. Edouard threw himself into an easy-chair and looked at Dufresne, who waited for him to speak first.

"Here I am, my dear fellow; I believed that I should find you at my house."

"I went there yesterday evening, but, seeing

that you did not return, I got tired of waiting and came away."

"Faith! you did well; you would have waited for me in vain. I passed the night at Madame de Geran's. You understand me?"

"Yes, very well. I compliment you; nobody could be more fortunate than you; that woman adores you."

"Oh, she is foolishly in love with me; there is no other word for it. She didn't even want me to leave her this morning; I had a good deal of trouble to tear myself away from her."

"Be careful; Madame de Geran has a very ardent temperament and an exalted imagination; she is capable of attaching herself permanently to you."

"You delight me; I love women like that."

"But if your wife should discover it?"

"Pshaw! my wife is indolent; her love in no way resembles that of Madame de Geran."

"If I dared to give you some advice —"

"Speak; banish ceremony, my dear Dufresne."

"Oh, I'll do that with much pleasure."

"Well, say on."

"Believe me, in order to have more freedom, you should send your wife to the country."

"Jove! what an excellent idea! Exactly what she is always talking about to me, — the days in the country, the fields, the verdure. I will send her out to pasture, and I shall stay in Paris."

"But you haven't told me about your game with Desfleurets. Did you win?"

"No; on the contrary, I had the most unprecedented ill-luck; I lost every time. You remind me that I owe him a thousand crowns, which I promised to give him this morning."

"Gaming debts are debts of honor; it is necessary to pay them."

"That's what I'm going to do. He has made an appointment with me at the Palais Royal,— at number nine. Does he live there?"

"Ha, ha, ha! you are verdant, my dear Murville. Are you not aware that number nine is a gaming-house, where one plays roulette?"

"What! does this chevalier play roulette?"

"Why not? You see very respectable people there; a good many noblemen go there to win money from plebeians and honest tradesmen, who are flattered at playing with a chevalier or a viscount. Decency always prevails there, and good manners — no noise. I assure you, many players in society might take lessons in decorum from those who frequent this gaming-house; one loses his money without complaining; nobody swears between his teeth, everything passes off smoothly."

"The deuce! I am curious to see it; but I don't think a business man ought to be seen in such places. I have heard people say that it would be very detrimental to his reputation."

"They were in error as to that, the proof of

which is that one meets there many merchants, business men, stockbrokers, brokers' agents. It is quite a respectable gathering; it is the rendezvous of military men, strangers, great noblemen travelling incognito; and then, the police watch to see that no inferior people slip in; one leaves 113 to servants, to workmen, to small manufacturers, because it is necessary that these honest people should amuse themselves; number nine is almost as decent as Frascati's."

"If that is the case, I need not hesitate about going there."

"You can't fail to find Desfleurets there. He is there from the time it opens until dinner time; in fact, he sometimes does not leave there for dinner. He establishes himself at the green table; he continues to play even when losing. For ten years he has been seeking a system of playing that will make his fortune, and is certain that he will discover it shortly; then he will impart it to his acquaintances. If one could only discover that! My faith! it would be lovely. One would have no need of worrying about anything; one could amuse one's self, one could live in the gayest society."

"Do you think such a thing possible?"

"Most certainly; there are more extraordinary things than that; there are examples — Wait; between ourselves, I know more than twenty people who have standing in society, who live with

much ostentation, following the fashions and denying themselves nothing, and who live only by play. Listen to a good author: —

". . Play gives the means to live at ease
To many honest persons, an' you please;
To cabbies, porters, greedy tradesmen too,
Who sell their doubtful gems and play the Jew;
Boasters who sup when luck their way doth turn,
And knights whose titles it were hard to learn;
To damsels who would sell their virtue cheap,
Did not the game their gaping pockets heap."

"You astonish me; I would not have believed it, for there is always a risk."

"My dear fellow, there's no risk for a man who keeps his head cool, and calculates the chances, the sequences and the probabilities. For the rest, I do not advise you to play; you are unlucky at cards; it is much better for you to hold to the safe — "

"By the way, how is business?"

"There's nothing doing; we must wait."

"So be it. Ah, my dear Dufresne, if we could only find a sure method, what a fling we would have while my wife is in the country!"

"Believe me, you'd better think no more of that. These are follies, chimeras. — I must leave you."

"We shall see each other this evening."

"Where?"

"Oh, at Madame de Geran's."

Dufresne and Edouard parted; the first, very sure of the effect his conversation would have upon the weak mind of Adeline's husband; and the latter, to dream of nothing but roulette and doubling stakes, and already forming the most extravagant plans.

In this disposition, Edouard arrived at the address designated by the chevalier; he entered, and, after passing through several rooms, he found himself in one where the players were grouped about a roulette table. He felt himself redden, and tried to hide his embarrassment and to look as though he were habituated to the game. The Chevalier Desfleurets perceived him and rose and went towards him, forgetting to play his spade, so eager was he to touch his thousand crowns. Edouard hastened to acquit himself of his debt; the chevalier, charmed by the alacrity of his debtor, invited the latter to take a seat beside him. Edouard hesitated; he glanced anxiously about him, fearing to meet some of his acquaintances. As a matter of fact, he recognized several business men whom he had seen with Dufresne, and some others who had come to his party. But all these persons appeared very much engrossed about the green cloth, and no one paid the slightest attention to him; the chevalier drew him along and he allowed himself to be led, and was soon seated at the roulette table.

Desfleurets took up his card again and played

his spade, after inquiring of a tall, thin man, in a maroon coat, what numbers were left; the tall gentleman glanced angrily at him, coughed, expectorated, made a grimace, closed his fists and did not answer him.

"He is an original," said the chevalier under his breath to Edouard; "he will pique for three hours before risking a ten-sous piece, and nearly always wait until it is too late; he is watching for the red zero, and I wager he will go away without that which he might have taken. Such a man as that should never play; he is too cowardly."

Edouard looked and listened in astonishment at all that which was now passing before him for the first time; for before his marriage he had never had the slightest desire to enter a gaming-house, having at that time sufficient prudence to defend himself from his own weakness. It is only when one is sure of not yielding to temptation, when one experiences that horror for gambling which should inspire every man of sense, that one can venture into a gambling-house. What a vast field for observation, for studying the effects of that baneful passion! The resulting reflections would be sufficiently sad, but it would give one a useful lesson; and in a gaming-house a young man might cure himself of this fatal taste, if he could view unmoved all that passes before him. What is this infatuation that takes possession of those unhappy men who are pressing towards that

table, devouring with their eyes the heaps of money — gold, silver, or bank notes — which are disposed before the croupiers? They do not see that all that is there only to seduce them, to draw them on. They say to themselves, "That one is winning, and that other is leaving with his pockets full; why should not we be as fortunate as they?" And should they be so, has money won in a gambling-house ever served to enrich a family, to support a wife, to portion a daughter, to succor the unfortunate? No, for gamblers have dry and hard hearts, and sordid souls, degraded by the passion which dominates them. If they win today they lose tomorrow, until they can no longer procure the means of satisfying this insatiable craving which draws them toward the fatal table. If they go home with pockets full of gold, they do not think of being more generous in their houses. Their wives are ill-clad, their children lack everything, and their creditors besiege their doors; but they give nothing, they pay nobody, they mock at the threats of those to whom they owe wages, they are deaf to the voice of nature. Soon they will lose all that they, by a stroke of good fortune, had previously won; then unhappy are the beings who are dependent on them, on whom they vent the rage which they dare not show before strangers. It is in their homes that they give themselves up to anger, to brutality, often going to the most extreme lengths. If they need money, they

will take possession of everything that may still produce it; the children's last garments are sold, the wage of a day's work disappears in a second on a color or a number. Then they throw dark looks about them, and despair is depicted on their features; they look with envy on the gold they cannot possess, and on the croupiers, who view their disappointment with the utmost indifference. Then the most guilty desires torment their exasperated imaginations; they covet their neighbor's money; they reach out for it with their hand; and often, impelled by the cruel passion which possesses them, they commit the most shameful crimes. These examples are only too frequent. Play has three results, but they are inevitable,—suicide, the poorhouse, or the hulks.

Edouard did not make these reflections, unfortunately for him. He watched the play, and, after he understood the method of arrangement of the roulette, he placed a twenty-franc piece on the red; this color came up nine times following. Edouard had always lost his money; now he won in five minutes ten thousand two hundred and forty francs. The Chevalier Desfleurets, who jumped out of his chair in astonishment at such good fortune, advised Murville in a whisper to stop there for a moment, because, according to the probabilities and the pricks on his card, the black could not fail to come up. The chevalier had much pleasure in seeing the young man win;

he hoped to meet him again at Madame de Geran's, and if he played écarté so badly and paid so well, it was good fortune to know that he was in funds.

Edouard did not trouble himself about probabilities, but he experienced the need of rest and refreshment, and rose and left the table, promising the chevalier to take a hand with him in the evening.

The ball stopped then in a compartment, and, contrary to the expectation of Desfleurets, it remained on the red. Edouard poignantly regretted that he had left off playing so soon, but he promised to indemnify himself on the first occasion. The tall man in the maroon coat, who had heard Desfleurets' advice to Edouard, allowed an oath to escape him when he saw the red turn up, which astonished Murville a little after what Dufresne had said as to the extreme etiquette which reigned in the place. Nevertheless, he put his gold in his pocket and left, radiant with his good fortune.

He directed his steps towards home, thinking of his wife on the way. She must have been very anxious, very angry, with him; she had not seen him since the evening before. He felt that it would be embarrassing for him to speak; however, he decided to see her, and, after carrying his gold to his office, where he found his clerk asleep over the Moniteur, Edouard went upstairs to his wife's room.

Despite the indifference which for some time he had felt for his wife, Edouard experienced much emotion when he saw the change that had taken place in her since the evening before. Adeline was pale, dispirited; her eyes were red and swollen with weeping; her features bore the imprint of the most profound sorrow. Edouard did not doubt that his wife's grief was caused by his absence; he drew near her, seeking for excuses with which to palliate his conduct. "You perhaps waited for me last night; you have been anxious, but I was detained against my will at a card party; I won and could not decently leave."

"You are the master of your own actions, monsieur," answered Adeline, without raising her eyes to her husband. "You would be very wrong to incommode yourself for me."

Edouard had not expected to meet so much submission; he had feared reproaches, complaints, tears; but Adeline added not another word; she sighed, and kept silence. This conduct appealed more strongly to her husband's heart than weeping and remonstrances. He felt himself grow tender, he was ready to fall on his knees before his wife and ask her pardon for his offences; but the image of Madame de Geran recurred to his thoughts; she changed all his feelings, and drove away a sensibility too plebeian for a man of fashion, and he returned to his new plans. "Madame, you have expressed to me a desire to return to

the country, and as spring is approaching we must profit by it. Besides, I think it will be good for the child. You had better start immediately; I cannot accompany you now; important business keeps me in Paris; but I hope, however, to go and see you often."

"Very well, monsieur; I will get ready for my visit to the country, and will stay there until I receive your orders to return."

"Upon my honor," said Edouard to himself, "my wife is charming. What submission! what obedience! It is truly extraordinary."

He took Adeline's hand and pressed it lightly between his own; and, without paying any attention to the trembling of that hand formerly so dear, he kissed it very coldly, and departed with the alacrity of a schoolboy who has heard the bell ring for recreation.

"He wishes me to go," said Adeline to herself, when she was alone; "my presence is troublesome. Well, I will go. What does it matter henceforth where I shall live, since nowhere can I find happiness? I have lost my husband's love, I have lost honor, peace; let me hide my sad existence; I desire to preserve it only for my child's sake; I will consecrate it entirely to her.—My poor child! What would become of you if you lost me?"

Adeline kissed her little girl, and her mother-love impelled her to strive to reanimate her broken courage. She made the necessary preparations for

her departure to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges; she wished greatly to induce her mother to accompany her, but Mamma Germeuil did not much care for country life; she had her settled ways, her acquaintances in Paris, and (old age is always selfish) she felt that but few pleasures were now left her, and did not care to sacrifice them. A week sufficed for Adeline to make the necessary preparations for herself and her child during their stay in the country. At the end of that time, during which she had only seen her husband at long intervals, she prepared to set out. However, before starting, she wished to make a last effort, not to recover her husband's love,—she knew too well that feeling cannot be commanded,—but to make him know Dufresne as he really was. Edouard would not listen to her, and refused to believe her when she spoke of the wretch who was leading him to his ruin; but Adeline remembered Madame Dolban, and thought that she would not refuse to write another letter to Murville, detailing the perversity of the man whom he called his friend.

It was for Edouard's honor, reputation, that Adeline took this last step, which would not restore her happiness, but which would reassure her as to the future fate of her husband. The young woman went immediately to Madame Dolban's house and informed the porter whom she wished to see.

"You are too late, madame," the man answered; "Madame Dolban died three days ago."

"She is dead!—and she wrote me only nine days ago."

"Mon Dieu! that's how it is in this world. A return of the fever, and then nervous spasms—I know not what—carried her off immediately."

"All is lost," said Adeline as she left; "there is now no hope of convincing Edouard. Dufresne triumphs. He will draw him on to his ruin."

Discouraged by this new reverse, the sorrowful Adeline hastened to leave Paris, and started with her babe for Villeneuve-Saint-Georges. Alone in the coach, with no one but her infant to witness her grief, she remembered the difference of the journey of the preceding year, and wept at the rapidity with which she had lost her happiness.

CHAPTER II

Tricksters, Gamblers, Criminals

In being freed from the presence of his wife, the sight of whom had still power to awaken the painful monitions of a conscience not yet wholly stultified, Edouard was freed also from the last restraint which decorum and decency impose, and he now gave himself up wholly to the evil counsels of Dufresne, to his guilty love for Madame de Geran, and to his mad passion for play.

As the reader is already aware, Dufresne had kept a large portion of the sum accruing from the sale of the stocks. His intention had been from the first to appropriate to himself a portion of Edouard's fortune, and he had already dipped freely several times into his friend's purse, because, he said, his business was not going well. But Dufresne, in addition to all other vices, possessed also that of gambling, and the sum which he had retained was soon lost in the gulf which had, a short time before, swallowed Madame Dolban's fortune.

Edouard passed a part of his days at the gaming house, and his nights at Madame de Geran's

where they played a gambler's game. Certain men sufficiently well dressed to pass for gentlemen, but whose features indicated their character, came each evening to the house of the general's widow, where they were sure to find Murville and some other dupes, for the possession of whom these intriguers and the women of questionable character disputed among themselves.

But Madame de Geran did not lose sight of her lover; she did not wish that her slave should escape her; she knew how to put in play all the arts of coquetry; every stratagem, every means, is employed to bewilder and delude a man who believes himself loved and makes every sacrifice to satisfy the desires of his mistress.

Madame de Geran led her lovers at a great pace. Play, the theatres, dinners, walks, junkets, dress, Indian shawls, jewels, suppers, endearments, caresses,—it was only with all those that one could reckon on her fidelity—at least ostensibly. But it must be confessed that in the midst of all these pleasures Edouard had not a moment to himself; he had not even time to feel bored,—a rare thing when one surfeits himself with everything.

However, luck had ceased to favor him. After winning at roulette several times in succession, he experienced the inconstancy of fortune and lost some large sums. In place of stopping then he became stubborn; this is an inevitable result of

early winnings, which delude those people who begin to frequent a gambling-house for the first time; then the croupiers look smilingly upon a player who leaves with his pockets full of gold, sure that on the next day the unhappy man will lose double the amount that he has won.

> If some one gambler has the luck to live by play,
> One sees a thousand die of hunger every day.

After trying trente-et-un, dice and roulette, and having in one hour lost twenty thousand francs, the entire remainder of the sum that Dufresne had remitted to him before his wife's departure, Edouard returned to his house very gloomy and anxious; he scolded his servants, and treated everyone roughly without reason; but necessarily his people had to bear the brunt of all his ill-humor. He went into his office, where he found the clerk asleep on his desk; he pushed him roughly.

"What are you doing there? Is that how you fulfil your duties?"

The young man yawned, extended his arms and rubbed his eyes, and looked at the business man, who strode up and down the office with long steps.

"Well, do you hear me, monsieur? Why are you not at work?"

"But, monsieur, you know very well I have nothing to do."

"Why do you not write the circulars for the provinces?"

"You know, monsieur, I have sent several of those circulars to the same persons and they have not answered."

"You are a fool! You do not understand how to conduct business. And that house which somebody wished to buy?"

"Monsieur, he came three times to get the particulars, but nobody could find you."

"You could have given them."

"But, monsieur, I was ignorant of them."

"And that investment in the funds which someone wished to make?"

"You made two appointments with him which you did not keep."

"What! these people seem to think I am at their orders."

"They said it was necessary to be punctual."

"Be silent; you are insolent. I don't want a clerk who goes to sleep in my office; I discharge you."

"You must pay my salary first."

"Your salary! Do you earn it by sleeping?"

"Monsieur, it is not my fault that there is nothing to do in your office; pay me and —"

"I will pay you; leave me."

Edouard knew well that he had not the wherewithal to pay his clerk; he opened his desk, looked in all the drawers, and found nothing. He relied on the sum still remaining in Dufresne's hands, and wished to see him, that he might instruct him

to sell at once, no matter at what price; he must absolutely have money. Tired and disordered by the events of the day, he did not wish to go out before dressing, and he decided to send at once in search of Dufresne; he rang, and called his valet; nobody answered. The servants were unaccustomed to see their master since Adeline had left the city; Edouard sometimes did not return to sleep at the house for nights together; the servants did not stand on ceremony, but amused themselves to pass the time. The good Marie, the only honest one, had gone to a new place since her mistress' departure. Edouard left his office and ran all over the house; he found the kitchen deserted, but the door of the cellar was open; he went down, and discovered his porter drinking wine with the cook; the servants remained speechless before their master's look, who swore, and took the porter by the ear, while he kicked the cook. "Monsieur," babbled the porter, who was a little the worse for drink, "you do not dine at home now, and we wanted to see that your wine was not turning sour."

Edouard drove the people before him; he left the cellar and regained the first floor, where he heard a noise in his wife's dressing-room; he entered, and found his valet in conversation with the porter's wife, who loved flirting as much as her husband loved wine.

"The deuce!" cried Edouard; "what a house!

what disorder! Do you think, you rabble, that I will suffer this? I shall turn you all out."

"As you please, monsieur," answered the valet carelessly; "if you will pay us our wages at once we are ready to leave."

Edouard angrily left the room and went and shut himself in his office. Since his wife left he had not paid his servants a sou, for he never had sufficient money to furnish his expenses; and now he must keep these wretches, who pillaged and robbed him and turned everything upside down in the house. But he thought that Dufresne would furnish the means to get him out of his embarrassment, and was getting ready to go and see him, when Dufresne entered his office with a desperate look.

"Ah, you come at the right time," cried Edouard; "I really needed to see you, my dear fellow. I must have some money — must have it today even."

"That will be difficult," answered Dufresne in a solemn tone.

"Why, you have the shares — have you not?"

"I came to tell you of a frightful misfortune. The one to whom I confided all that — that is, the blank power-of-attorney — "

"Well?"

"He has sold the shares — but he has parted with the money."

"Parted with it?"

"Yes; he has disappeared, and it is impossible to hear anything of him."

Edouard heard this with consternation, and despairingly sank into an easy-chair.

"I am ruined! I have lost all!"

"Ruined! What folly to talk of ruin when one has credit — acquaintances! Come, pull yourself together; I promise you to repair this loss; have faith in my zeal, my friendship. It was my fault; I placed too much confidence in him. I will extricate you from this scrape."

"Yes, but in what way?"

"There are a thousand ways."

"Remember that I have not a sou, and that I need money at every turn, especially with Madame de Geran, from whom I must hide this misfortune."

"You will do well to hide it, though I am persuaded she loves you."

"I have had to promise her a cashmere shawl, for which she had a great desire."

"You will give it to her. — Wait; sign that."

"What is it?"

"For twenty thousand francs in notes payable to my order."

"But I owe you nothing."

"No doubt; but must we not have some money? One calls those notes made under the rose."

"But is it permissible?"

"Permissible? Oh, the deuce! nobody asks permission to make those."

"But isn't it rather risky to —"

"Ha! ha! You make one laugh with your scruples. In the end you will pay them, and then what can anybody say?"

"And you hope to discount them?"

"I am sure. Everybody believes you to be wealthy; you have an establishment; your party increased your credit. Be easy; tomorrow I will bring you some funds, and nothing is necessary but a stroke of good luck for you to regain double the amount you have lost today."

"That cursed roulette! A series of—"

"Oh, that was chance; it does not happen twice alike. That devil of a Desfleurets says he has found an infallible method, but he must have some capital to commence."

"We should not have enough perhaps."

"Oh, I have resources. But sign quickly; I must go and discount your notes."

Edouard signed for twenty thousand francs in bills of exchange, and, to distract himself, he went to see his mistress. She pouted a little at not seeing the shawl she desired, but he promised she should have it the next day, and she became again charming; she scolded her loving friend on his serious and preoccupied manner, which he excused by saying he was very much occupied by some important business. She kissed him; she flattered,

she caressed him. A man who embarks in big speculations and is generous is a treasure worth keeping.

The company was not late in arriving, and if it was not very select, it was, at least, numerous. Ruined marquises, lords without castles, proprietors without estates, swindlers, sharpers, business men like Edouard, — all players and schemers, — and some young men of birth who had nothing to lose, or some imbeciles who believed they were in good society, — these were the men who composed the bulk of the company. And the women were worthy of these gentlemen: some old schemers, some go-betweens, some kept women, or those who sought to be so, — all frequenters of those gambling-houses which admitted the fair sex, similar to the reunions at Madame de Geran's, at which they affected propriety, good manners and correct language, which, however, quickly became low and dissolute when the passions of these ladies and gentlemen were excited to the point of forgetting their fine toilet and their pretended rank.

Madame de Geran served punch, a respectable way of raising the spirits of the players and inducing them to think the ladies pretty. Imagination, when warmed by liquor, lends a charm to superannuated and withered beauties. The glasses circulated; wits became obscured; they played high; the heat was suffocating, and the ladies unfastened their fichus or took them off.

Edouard, who admired none of these ladies, because he was entirely subjugated by one alone, sat down at one of the card-tables after borrowing thirty louis of his mistress, to whom he said that he had forgotten to bring any money. She lent it to him readily, very sure that he would return it with interest the next day.

A certain Marquis de Montclair, an intimate friend of Desfleurets, proposed a game of écarté to Edouard; they placed themselves, and Desfleurets remained behind Edouard, to whom he declared that he would give him luck. However, far from winning, Murville lost every game; the thirty louis he had borrowed was already gone, but they played willingly with him on his word, because they knew the promptitude with which he paid.

Madame de Geran caused the punch to circulate profusely; she herself quickly drank several glasses, that she might more gracefully perform her duties as a hostess. Everyone appeared fully occupied, — some with play, some with flirtation; noise replaced the ordinary propriety, modesty was less evident, and the gayety of the ladies was a trifle free. Someone was swearing in one corner, somebody laughing in another; they quarrelled, they teased; they disputed at play, they engaged in flirtations on the ottomans. It was a very varied and a very animated scene, where each one had his peculiar interest.

Madame de Geran seemed a little excited herself, though she was not playing; she drew near Edouard's party for an instant, and, seeing that he was deeply absorbed in his play, left the drawing-room.

Edouard was unable to win a single game. Despair and rage filled his heart. He already owed fifteen thousand francs to the marquis, and incessantly doubled his stakes, in the hope of clearing himself; but his attempts were always frustrated. Pale, trembling, wild-eyed, he knew not what he did; his hands shook, his muscles were contracted, he breathed painfully. "I will play you for fifteen thousand francs at a time," he said at last in a changed voice.

"All right," answered the marquis; "you see I know the game. I am sorry, however, to see you lose so constantly."

Edouard made no reply; he was absorbed by the game he was about to engage in; his eyes were fixed on the cards which held his fate. There were no witnesses of the game except Desfleurets, who still remained behind Edouard's chair, and an elderly coquette, who was very intimate with the marquis and interested herself in his play; the rest of the company were occupied at other tables. The game proceeded; the marquis had already made three points; he returned a king. Edouard, outraged by such unfailing good luck, turned suddenly to complain to Desfleurets, and perceived

that the latter, with some other cards, showed from behind Murville's back all his play to his adversary. The chevalier made an attempt to hide the cards he held; but Edouard did not give him time, and, snatching the cards from his hands, saw the trickery of which he had been the dupe, and, overturning the table in a fury, announced to the marquis that he would not pay him. The marquis, used to similar scenes, showed no anxiety except to get his money. Edouard called him a cheat; his adversary took a chair and threatened him with it; Desfleurets hastened to pick up several louis that had fallen upon the floor, the old coquette screamed, and Murville seized a candlestick and hurled it at his creditor's head. It struck the marquis in the face, and he lost an eye and a nostril. He uttered the most frightful cries; everybody rose; the women fled, some men did the same; the swindlers, who saw themselves in a majority, surrounded Edouard, and were about to thrash him, when Dufresne entered the drawing-room. At a glance he saw Edouard's danger; accustomed to profit by circumstances, he made his way towards him, pushing everybody aside; he shouted louder than any of the others, and, making a sign to Edouard to depart, said that he would settle the matter, and promised the marquis to see that he was paid the value of his face, which ought not to be a big price. Dufresne's tone impressed these gentlemen; they grew calmer, and Murville, who felt

that he was the weaker party, quitted the room, leaving Dufresne to settle the difficulty.

To console himself for this adventure, Edouard sought Madame de Geran; she was not in the drawing-room; he crossed several antechambers without meeting her; she had no doubt retired to her own room, which was just above. He ran precipitately up the stairs, which were not lighted; but he knew the way. He opened the dressing-room door, and perceived a light which showed under the bedroom door; the key was in the lock; he entered suddenly and beheld his dear mistress in conversation with her jockey. Madame de Geran, seeing that she could not explain away her lack of fidelity to Edouard, paid no attention to him, nor did the jockey, who thought he was merely one of the players who had been quarrelling below.

Edouard's anger, restrained for a few seconds by his surprise, broke out anew with great fury. He seized a fire shovel, and with it applied numerous blows to Charlot's person, who yelled that he was being assassinated; Madame de Geran shrieked with fear; and Edouard shouted louder than both of them, and, tired of beating Charlot, he threw the shovel into madame's mirror. The broken glass fell in showers; Edouard swore, and raved like a madman; Charlot wept, and rubbed his wounded back; madame cried loudly for help, because she feared for the rest of her furniture,

and even for herself. In her fright she pushed the jockey against a washstand, which he overturned, and the washbasin, the sponges, the water bottles, the scents, rolled on the floor; and at the noise, the cries, the shouts, the weeping, some of the company came running from the drawing-room and penetrated into the boudoir.

Each one expressed his astonishment at finding Madame de Geran's room in such disorder, the jockey in the midst of the fragments of the mirror, the basin and the bottles; and at Edouard, who, with furious eye, promenading amidst the ruins, like Achilles on the ramparts of Troy, appeared ready to lay waste everything with fire and sword.

They all wanted to know what had happened; they pushed and inquired, and, in trying to restore peace, increased the disorder. The Marquis de Montclair held his handkerchief to his face to retain the rest of his nose; he swore that Murville was a madman, and ought to be shut up. Desfleurets followed him, still holding in his hand a pack of cards with which he had prepared some particular stroke; he put into his pocket all the flasks and sponges he could lay his hand on. Those who retained the greatest self-possession sought to calm Murville, advising him to allow people to explain before beating them. Madame refused all explanations, but demanded the price of her mirror and her toilet arrangements. Edouard called her some very ugly names and repulsed everybody;

Dufresne, who was always in evidence in difficult moments, drew Edouard by his coat and compelled him to quit the boudoir, leaving each one to laugh or cry, according to his or her peculiar fancy.

"You are a child," said Dufresne to Murville, when they were in the street. "Why did you make such a rumpus?"

"Why? why? Don't you know I have been betrayed, infamously deceived, by that woman, whom I thought in love with me? And for whom? For a servant, forsooth!"

"Good Heavens! is that a reason for turning a house upside down? It is necessary to know how to take things philosophically. One does not break furniture for such a trifle as that; you will find a thousand other women to adore you — for your money."

"After all the sacrifices I had made for her!"

"Ah, that is very annoying, I confess. But, my dear fellow, the money one gives to a woman may always be counted as lost. Hold! the most unfortunate part of the whole business is your affair with Montclair. I have been obliged to give him a great part of your letters of exchange, that he might not go and show his face to a justice of the peace; and that would mean a trial, pleadings, actions and costs, which it is always necessary to avoid. Jove! do you know that you are a terrible man? To cut off one man's nose and flay the

other man's back! If I allowed you to do it, you would put yourself in a fine hole. Fortunately, I am always there to quiet you; but this evening will cost you dearly."

"What about the money I was counting on?"

"Oh, make yourself easy; you shall have it. You shall make other notes; and besides, the luck changes; one is not always so unfortunate. There are some means of compelling fortune."

"Some means?"

"Yes, yes; you shall know them a little later. But see; day is beginning to break. It is time for us to go to bed. Come to my place. Tomorrow we will think about the business."

Dufresne led Edouard, who, wild-eyed, dispirited, hopeless from all he had experienced lately, already dared neither to look back nor to face what the future held for him.

"Ah, this is all very well, but it is now necessary to investigate our affairs," said Dufresne, as he rose after the stormy night passed at Madame de Geran's. "You must make another twenty thousand francs' worth of notes; I will endeavor to get them discounted; I confess, however, that it is more difficult than I thought it would be. They don't much care about our signatures. They are over nice. There are the Jews; they will take them at fifty per cent. What do you say?"

"The deceitful creature! To betray me for a lackey!"

"What! are you still thinking of your unfaithful flame? What folly!"

"If I could only revenge myself!"

"The best vengeance is to make a fortune and live in luxurious style; then she will regret you. You realize that money is necessary for everything. I must go out and get some. Don't allow yourself to be a prey to sadness; it will only enfeeble you and do you no good. Go and take a turn at play. That'll restore your nerve and give you some ideas."

"I haven't a penny. What sort of a figure should I cut there?"

"You can look for a way of getting it. Good-by! I'm going after some money."

Dufresne went out and Edouard returned home, where he found a letter from his wife. It was the sixth she had written since her sojourn in the country, but Edouard had never answered them. He had read the first; it contained Adeline's wishes for his welfare, and begged him to take care of his health, but held never a word of love; Adeline no longer dared speak to him of hers. To speak of one's love to one who is unfaithful is to speak to a blind man of colors, to a deaf man of music, to a savage of good manners.

Edouard no longer read his wife's letters, because he did not know how to answer her. His heart said nothing to him, and his conscience said too much. He hardened the one and did not

listen to the other. The season was advancing; he feared lest Adeline should speak of her return, for he felt that her presence would be more embarrassing than ever. He wished to hide from her the state of his business, which only confirmed the fears which his wife and his mother-in-law had expressed.

On entering his apartments, our business man was greatly surprised to find there some bailiffs, who were proceeding to seize some of his furniture.

"What is the meaning of this?" cried Edouard. "Who sent you here?"

"Monsieur," answered a little dark man, "it is the proprietor of this hotel, whose rent you have not paid."

"He should have given me warning."

"He has sent you summonses."

"I have not read them."

"That is not my fault."

"I don't understand the processes."

"You must be joking, monsieur,—a business man!"

"I am not doing any business now."

"That is nothing to us."

Edouard left the myrmidons of the law and went to his office; his clerk was not there. He looked over his papers, but he knew nothing of his own business. He angrily threw his boxes into the middle of the room. He went downstairs and

called his servants. They had left. The porter alone remained, and he answered Edouard insolently, because he saw that the latter was ruined.

Murville left his dwelling and walked slowly towards the Palais Royal, not knowing where to turn, nor how to free himself from the bailiffs. He waited for Dufresne, that he might consult him. The latter arrived at last, apparently in a satisfied frame of mind, and announced that he had obtained some money. Edouard pulled himself together at this news, and told Dufresne all that had passed at his hotel.

"My faith!" said Dufresne. "Believe me, you had better let them do as they will, and you will sell all your movables that are of no use at the present time. You have no need of such a big establishment since you live as a bachelor; it is money lying idle; we can make good use of it."

"But if my wife returns—"

"Bah! she prefers the country; and, besides, you know that in Paris, with money, one can find in an hour a hotel, furniture and servants."

"That is true, but you have always advised me to live in good style."

"We can live magnificently in furnished lodgings."

"But—my reputation—"

"Be easy; that's in a good way. Make your fortune and leave talk to fools; that is the essential thing."

"Yes, but I am far from making a fortune."

"Because you don't know how to do things."

"I do everything you tell me."

"Oh, no; you have still some false delicacy which will not conduce to your success, and of which it is necessary to rid yourself. But come to the restaurant; we'll have some champagne and madeira, and scoff at events."

Edouard allowed himself to be led, and abandoned himself blindly to Dufresne's counsels; he followed the torrent which drew him, and persons who had seen him at the time of his marriage would hardly have been able to recognize him, so much had debauchery and gambling changed him.

What an existence is that of a player! Never any rest, any peace; it seems as though an incessant fever preys upon his vitals; his eyes are sunken and red, his skin pale and wrinkled by watching, his cheeks hollow, his features drawn, his dress dirty and disordered, his step short and uneven; his eyes have an expression of anxiety; his smile is bitter; gayety seems foreign to his mind, which is constantly agitated by a thirst for gold, a desire for gain, and by the anxiety of play.

Such a one had Edouard become. Who could have recognized the young man as he who, all-engrossed by his happiness, his love, proudly led his charming bride to the altar? But his features are shrunken, and the expression of his face has changed; his voice even is not recognizable; for

in the midst of the apprehensions, the distractions, which he experienced each day, the exclamations of despair, of fury, the oaths and imprecations, had rendered his tone gloomy and raucous. His conversation adapted itself to the company he frequented; it is not in gambling-hells, with dissolute women and cheats, that one acquires the tone of good society; rather, one loses there all politeness, all modesty, all propriety. Edouard shouted, lost his temper, swore at everything; his manners, his bearing, his principles, were after the models which he had constantly before his eyes. A virtuous, upright and sensible man does not find it easy to resist the example of an evil acquaintance; what, then, could be expected of a weak man, subservient to his passions, and who surrounded himself only with the dregs of society?

Winter had come; Edouard received no more letters from his wife. He was ignorant of the fact that Dufresne had received them, and had returned them to Adeline as if coming from her husband. The first notes had been paid with the sale of the furniture, but the second ones were due, and the two inseparables had no more money. It was in vain that Murville, who did not redden now at holding out his hand and borrowing from one and another, came in the evening, with the little he had been able to scrape together, to seat himself at the fatal green table; it was in vain that he endeavored to calculate and to make new

combinations of cards in redoubling his stakes; nothing came of it, and he saw the money that he tremblingly deposited on some number pass into the hands of the croupier. The fatal rake drew away from him the sum he had hoped to quadruple; he had nothing left; he turned his eyes about the room, seeking some acquaintance from whom he might still borrow, but he saw nobody. Gamblers have not many friends. Edouard left number nine; he went through the galleries of the Palais Royal, and went up to every gambling-house, in search of Dufresne or someone else; he met no one who was willing to lend to him. He arrived at number 113, which as yet he had not visited. He saw the poor workman who comes to risk tremblingly the fruits of his day's labor, and leaves with empty pockets, to return to his dwelling, where his hard-working wife watches for him, awaiting the return of her husband to go and buy something for the supper of their little brood; but he brings nothing, and the poor children go to bed without food, while the unhappy mother waters her miserable bed with her tears, because her husband has been gambling.

And the shopkeeper whom everyone believes to be engrossed in his trade, — what does he here in this den of vice? He loses his money, his reputation, his honor, and the best of his customers; he should on the morrow meet some bills that he has signed, and he comes to seek the means to

do so at roulette. His look is fixed on the color which he hopes to see turn up, and each time the number frustrates his play. His hand clutches at his breast, disordering his garments and tearing his flesh; but he feels nothing. His attention is concentrated on the ball which will decide his fate.

This young man of honest exterior, decent dress, and an air of seeking to hide himself because he is still sensitive to shame, is here to risk a sum of money which the banker by whom he is employed has intrusted to him to carry to his lawyer. Fortune betrays him; he has lost all. He remains stunned; he cannot yet realize his crime, his loss. What shall he do when he leaves this haunt, where he has lost his honor? His family is poor but honest; he cannot persuade himself to dishonor it, to hear his father's reproaches; despair takes possession of his soul; he sees but one way of avoiding the future which horrifies him. He leaves, and hastily turns his steps towards the river bank; he reaches it, and puts an end to his existence by throwing himself into the stream; and one who might have had a happy and honorable career, one who should have added to the happiness and well-being of his family, commits suicide at twenty years of age, because he has been gambling.

Similar scenes no less true take place under our eyes every day. When will such houses of crime cease to be tolerated?

Edouard should have profited by the examples which he had before him, instead of which he applied himself to the game. He still had ten sous in his pocket, and he hastened to join the play at a table where they raked in the last stivers of the unfortunate.

He had been at this table but a moment, seated next to a man who looked like a beggar, when Dufresne appeared, and signed to him to follow.

"I have good news to tell you," said he with a joyous air; "in the first place, your mother-in-law died yesterday evening, very suddenly, of a stroke of apoplexy."

"She is dead!"

"There is a fellow here, who lodges at her house, who came to tell me. More, I have obtained some money on your bills of exchange, on the condition that you give your house at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges as security."

"My house — but —"

"Come, you are not going to make difficulties? Besides, with the little you will have from your mother-in-law, you can pay your notes and keep your house. You see everything is arranged for the best. Oh, if I had but thought sooner of the house in the country! But that you should have some capital is very essential. It will be necessary, in order to receive what Madame Germeuil has left, that you should get power-of-attorney from your wife."

"But how shall I get it? I shall not dare to tell her of her mother's death; she will be heart-broken."

"Well, I'll charge myself with that mission, if you wish. I will go for you to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, and break the news to your wife, with all possible consideration."

"You will do me a great favor. Say to her, also, that I do not forget her, and that I expect to go and see her immediately."

"Yes, I know all that I ought to say to her. You may have every confidence in my zeal and friendship."

This arrangement being perfected, Dufresne hastened to obtain the necessary papers, that he might at once join Adeline, whom he was ardently impatient to see. As to Edouard, after signing away as security his house in the country, his family's last shelter, and having thus imperilled the whole of his effects, he gave himself anew to the frenzied passion which dominated him.

CHAPTER III

The Good People. Recognition

Adeline was still at the delightful country home at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges where, only a short year before, she had been so singularly happy. She had arrived there in a very sorrowful and despondent frame of mind; but at length the quiet of the fields, the restful calm of nature, the first caresses of her child, had brought back in some degree her peace of mind; she became in a measure resigned to her fate.

During the first days of her arrival, and, indeed, for some time after, she had hoped that Edouard would yet rejoin her, that he would quit his unsatisfactory mode of life, give up the false pleasures by which he had been enticed, and have his eyes opened as to the character of the people by whom he was surrounded; but as time passed she lost this last hope. She wrote to her husband, but he did not answer her; through her mother she received news of what was transpiring in Paris, and this news was hopeless. She learned to what excesses he whom she still loved had given himself up; she trembled; she thought of Dufresne's vengeance and Edouard's weakness; she

still wrote, but her letters were returned to her unopened. This last mark of indifference and contempt cut Adeline to the heart; she waited in silence and without uttering a complaint that the man whose first thought should have been for her happiness had thus forgotten the ties that bound him to her.

One day, while walking in the country, carrying her little Ermance, Adeline, deep in thought, did not realize that she had walked much farther than usual, but at length fatigue compelled her to stop. She looked about her; she did not recognize the spot, and, fearing she should have difficulty in finding her way back, she directed her steps towards a farm which she saw in the distance, that she might ask her way and if necessary obtain a guide.

She arrived presently at Guillot's farm, for it was this she had seen. Louise was at her door, driving the fowls and ducks into their coops; Sans-Souci was in the yard, piling some bundles of hay; the children, according to their usual custom, were paddling in the mud and litter, in the midst of the geese and chickens.

The scene made Adeline smile; she regretted that she had not been born in a village, where the days roll uniformly along, monotonous, perhaps, but at least void of trouble and bitterness.

The farmer's wife hastened to invite the young lady to walk into the farmhouse. She took little

Ermance and danced her in her arms while answering Adeline's questions; the latter found that she was more than five miles from home, and, touched by the frank and cordial welcome of the villagers, consented to rest for a short time with them and to share the meal which was being prepared against the return of the workers from the fields.

Six o'clock sounded, the hour when the farm people habitually met to partake cheerfully of their simple though good and nourishing meal, which was always seasoned with appetite.

Guillot came carrying some wood, according to his habit; Sans-Souci came into the room humming a song; and Jacques deposited in a corner the instruments of their labor. The farmer looked at the young matron with the good-natured air that was customary to him; Jacques bowed, and went to refresh himself without paying much attention to Adeline; while she looked at the newcomer, trying to recall a circumstance which had vanished from her memory.

When they met at table Jacques was seated near Adeline, who was surprised at his politeness, his frank manners, and at his tenderness with the children. From time to time she glanced at the stern face adorned with long mustaches and seamed by several scars; Jacques did not perceive that the young woman's attention was directed toward him; he was not likely to recognize a person whom he

had seen only once through the iron palings of a garden, and to whom he then had not paid much attention. But in looking attentively at Jacques' face, and above all at his enormous mustaches, Adeline remembered where she had first seen him, and could not restrain an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, is it you, monsieur? Ah, I knew well I had seen you before."

"Are you speaking to me, madame?" asked Jacques in astonishment.

"Yes, monsieur. Oh, yes, it was assuredly you; I am certain now."

"You know my comrade, madame?" said Sans-Souci. "In that case you know a brave, an honest man."

"Oh, I do not doubt that; however, monsieur frightened me very much."

"Frightened you, madame? I am sorry for it, but how could I have done that?"

"Do you remember a certain day on which you went to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, about six months ago? You stopped for some time before a garden gate; it was an iron gate badly covered with planks, through which those in the garden could only see your face; and I confess that what with your eyes, your scars and your mustaches, we were very much afraid."

"What, madame!" said Jacques, when he had in turn observed her with interest; "you were in that garden?"

"Yes, monsieur; it is that belonging to my house. But that day I was visiting it for the first time with my mother and my husband."

Jacques answered nothing; he became gloomy and dreamy; he passed his hand over his forehead, caressed his mustaches for a moment, and allowed a deep sigh to escape him.

"Why, now," said Guillot, after drinking a large glass of wine, "that's the way it is; I say it often takes less than a pair of mustaches behind a gate to frighten — for people who are afraid, and —"

"That's true, my man," said the farmer's wife, cutting short Guillot's eloquence; "besides, if madame had seen the cross of honor which our friend Jacques wears on his breast, she would not have been afraid."

"Oh," said Adeline, "I do not need to see it now to judge of my error. But the situation was peculiar. Women are easily frightened, and that mustached face which appeared at the bottom of the garden —"

"Why, indeed," resumed Guillot, "there's nothing to be ashamed of in that. I believe I should have been afraid myself, because of the surprise — those mustaches popping up behind a railing in a garden. One cannot help being startled sometimes."

"Oh, keep still, my man; you're a coward. Isn't he, cousin? It's a shame."

"Ah, thousand bayonets!" said Sans-Souci; "if

some robbers should attack the farm, I would make them march off double-quick."

"Is your husband still at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges?" asked Jacques of Adeline, after a moment of silence.

"No; he is in Paris; has been there for a long time."

The young woman's manner as she pronounced these words was so sad that Jacques repented his question. The more he observed his brother's wife, the more he felt drawn towards her. He did not doubt that Edouard had kept the fact of their meeting a secret.

"She would not have repulsed me," he said to himself; "with such sweetness of face and voice, one could not have a hard and insensitive heart. Edouard alone is to blame. I will say nothing to her about it. I should only distress her needlessly; and, besides, I do not wish to have anything to do with the wretch who repulsed me."

Night approached; Adeline could not remain in the village, and each one offered to accompany her home; she chose Jacques, to prove to him that she had no disagreeable memories connected with him. He, secretly flattered by the preference, took little Ermance on his arm and offered the other to the young woman, who said good-by to the other people of the farm, and, delighted at their cordial welcome, promised to come and see them often.

They made their way at first silently. From time to time Jacques kissed the sweet baby, who was not more than eight months old, but who smiled already at the brave soldier and stroked his mustaches with her tiny hand.

"I am ashamed," said Adeline, "to give you so much trouble; but I did not think I could find the way."

"Madame, you are giving me a pleasure."

"That child tires you?"

"Tires me? No, thousand guns! Ah, pardon me; one should not swear before ladies."

"One excuses that in an old soldier."

"I am so very fond of children, and this little darling is really so sweet—"

"Ah, she is my only consolation," said Adeline to herself in a low tone.

Jacques could not hear what she murmured, but he saw she was sad, and he changed the conversation.

"Undoubtedly you will soon return to Paris, madame; the summer is almost over; October will soon be here."

"No, I do not think of leaving the country yet. Perhaps I shall pass the winter here."

"That's singular," said Jacques to himself; "she remains in the country, and her husband in the city. Do they disagree? — In that case," he resumed, "I trust we shall sometimes have the pleasure of seeing madame at the farm."

"Yes; I shall give myself a treat and go there again some day. You are related to the farmer, I believe."

"No, madame; my comrade is their cousin; but I — I am only an old soldier, without family, without acquaintances, to whom they have been kind enough to furnish employment."

"I am sure they congratulate themselves every day on having secured your services. You are still young; you cannot have served long in the army."

"Excuse me; I enlisted at a very early age."

"And on your return from the army you had no mother, no sister, to care for you and make you forget the fatigues of war?"

"No, madame; I had only one relation, but he treated me with very little friendship; I am proud, and I have some honor; I repulsed his aid, which was not offered with the heart, and which would have humiliated me."

"He was, no doubt, some distant relation."

"Yes, madame."

"My husband has a brother — Why, he is named Jacques, like you; a great many years ago he left his family, and is probably dead, for if he still lived he would come back. Oh, I am very sure Edouard would be delighted to see him."

Jacques answered nothing, but he turned his head, that Adeline might not see a tear which had escaped from his eye.

At this point they reached Murville's house. Adeline invited Jacques to go in and rest for a few moments, but he refused, fearing that he should yield to his emotion and betray himself.

"At least," said the young woman, "when you come to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, I hope that you will stop to see me; I should like you to visit the gardens, which you have never seen except through a railing."

"It will give me much pleasure, madame; and I beg also that you will not forget the farm."

Adeline promised, and Jacques took himself off, still casting back a look at the house.

"He is a brave man," said Adeline, as she entered the house, "and mamma and I judged very badly; I am quite sure that his rough exterior hides a sensitive soul and an honest heart. Ah, appearances are very deceitful."

Some time after, Adeline went to the farm, accompanied by her nurse, a big country girl, who carried the baby. The villagers welcomed her joyfully. Adeline was so amiable, so sweet, so simple, that the good people were at their ease before her. Guillot made some phrases wide of the mark; Louise jumped little Ermance; Sans-Souci swore that he had never seen so sweet a woman in a whole regiment; and Jacques evinced for the young lady the greatest deference, the most lively interest. His attentions to Adeline were so refined, and his manner so respectful, that she did

not know how to interpret his conduct, which at the time seemed touching and mysterious. But Jacques' look had an expression which could not give offence; it was interest and friendship which she read in his eyes, and, without being able to account for it, she experienced the same feeling for him.

They all disputed for the honor of conducting the young lady to her home; Guillot offered his arm; Louise wished to carry the little one; Jacques, to serve as guide; and Sans-Souci wished to go to light the way. But Adeline, to prevent jealousy, returned alone with her nurse when it was not too late, unless, however, the weather was not very good; then Villeneuve-Saint-Georges was the object of the walk which everyone wished to take with Madame Murville, who was touched by the attachment for her which was exhibited by the country folk.

Thus several months rolled by. Winter had appeared, the verdure was gone, the country was dreary. Adeline received no society. She was alone in the house with her maid and an old gardener, in place of the insolent porter, whom Adeline had dismissed, because she knew that he harshly drove away the poor, — the beggars who asked for a morsel of bread at the door of her house.

Adeline's only distraction was to go to the farm when the weather was fine and the cold not too

nipping for her baby. Jacques experienced a sweet satisfaction when he saw her; but he hid a part of his feeling, lest it should give rise to curiosity among the peasants. Sans-Souci was the only one who had Jacques' confidence; he knew that Adeline was the wife of his comrade's brother, but he had sworn to reveal the secret to no one, and his word could be relied on, though he was secretly vexed that he could not tell Adeline of the ties which bound her to his comrade. But Jacques wished it so; he had divined a part of the grief of his sister-in-law, and he did not wish to augment it by telling her of Edouard's conduct in respect to himself.

However, they were very far from divining at the farm or in the village what was transpiring at Paris. The news had not come that would too soon destroy the repose which she still tasted. Dufresne was charged with the mission of disturbing the peace of a woman whom he could not forgive for his defeat. One day Adeline learned that a gentleman from Paris wished to speak to her; she went into the drawing-room where the stranger had been shown, and trembled with horror on perceiving Dufresne, who was seated in an easy-chair tranquilly awaiting her.

"You here, monsieur?" said she, struggling to rekindle her courage. "I did not believe that you would dare to face me."

"Forgive me, madame," answered Dufresne in

a hypocritical tone; "I had hoped that time would have tempered your hatred."

"Never, monsieur. You are only too well aware that your outrages can never be effaced from my memory. Tell me immediately what has brought you here."

"I shall cause you pain, but your husband's orders —"

"Speak! I am prepared for anything."

"Your mother — But no doubt you are informed."

"My mother! O Heavens! can she be ill? But she wrote me only a short while ago."

"She has had a stroke of apoplexy, — congestion of the brain."

"Good God! she is no more! and I was not with her in her last moments."

Adeline sank into a chair, prostrated. At length the tears streamed from her eyes, and her sobs, her grief, would have softened the hardest heart; but the breast of Dufresne was untenanted by humane or tender feeling, and was filled only by the passions which degrade humanity. He contemplated the grief of this young and beautiful woman, on whom he had brought the direst misfortunes, in silence; he listened unmoved to her sighs; he seemed to count her sobs, and, far from experiencing the slightest pang of regret, he meditated further deeds which would augment her present suffering. The presence of Dufresne increased

Adeline's grief; before him she did not even feel free to weep nor to occupy herself with thoughts of her mother. She tried to regain her courage a little, that she might send away this despicable man who was gloating over her suffering.

"Had you no other object in coming here but to tell me of the cruel loss I have sustained?" said she, rising, and restraining her sobs.

"Madame, it is necessary to settle Madame Germeuil's affairs — to take proper steps in regard to the property she left. I thought it would be painful for you to attend to these details. Besides, they are your husband's concerns; but your signature is necessary, and I have brought the papers."

"Give them to me; I will sign everything; I consent to abandon my claims, so that at least your presence shall no longer invade my privacy."

While saying these words, poor Adeline seized the papers which Dufresne presented to her; she signed all of them blindly, gave them back to him, and was about to withdraw; but he retained her forcibly by the arm, just as she was leaving the room.

"One moment, madame; you have been in a great hurry to get rid of me. As to me, I wish to compensate myself for the time I have passed without seeing you. Besides, I have news of your husband to communicate."

A cruel smile glittered in Dufresne's eyes;

Adeline trembled, and endeavored to free herself.

"Let me go," cried Adeline, "or I will have you punished for your audacity!"

"Not so proudly, fair Adeline. Do you think that I have not taken my precautions? Your gardener is at work at the bottom of the garden; your maid is in the kitchen, where she cannot hear you. You see I know the house perfectly; you will remain here because I wish it; you will listen to me, and we shall see what follows."

"Wretch! do not think you can intimidate me? The hate with which you have inspired me has redoubled my strength."

"Ah! You still hate me? You will not become reasonable. I am of a generous disposition, and I will forget your insults if you will give me your love. But take care; my patience will exhaust itself, and then I shall be capable of everything."

"O my God! must I listen to such infamy?"

"Come! no more anger. You can no longer love your husband; he has abandoned you, forgotten you, ruined you; he runs after women and frequents gaming-houses. He is now nearly as much of a rake as he is a gambler, and that is not saying a little. He will bring you to the direst poverty. I will give you wealth; I shall consider nothing too costly if it pleases you. Open your eyes, and see if I am not worth more than your imbecile of an Edouard. You are silent. Come,

I see that you feel the truth of what I say. Let us make peace."

Dufresne drew nearer to Adeline, who uttered a piercing cry.

"Oh, what is this? Always so chaste! Oh, I've not made my journey for nothing; I must have a kiss."

"Monster! I would rather die."

"Oh, no; one doesn't die for such a little thing as that."

In vain the unfortunate Adeline tried to flee; the wretch held her, and was about to sully her beautiful lips with his vile breath, when a great noise was heard, and in a moment Jacques entered the drawing-room, followed by Sans-Souci.

Dufresne had not time to depart; the struggle which Adeline had made had exhausted her powers; she could barely murmur the words, "Help me! Save me from this scoundrel!" and fell unconscious to the floor.

Jacques ran to Adeline, threatening Dufresne; the latter was about to leave, when Sans-Souci barred his way, crying, "One minute, comrade; you have insulted that young lady, and that will not be allowed to pass so easily."

"You are in error," answered Dufresne, forcing himself to hide the uneasiness he felt at the sight of Jacques. "That lady had a nervous attack; I ran in answer to her cries; I am going to bring help. Let me go and find her maid."

Sans-Souci, undecided, did not know what to think, when Jacques, struck by the voice of Dufresne, turned, and looked closely at him; he soon recognized him, and cried to Sans-Souci, —

"Arrest that thief there, and don't let him escape. It's Breville; it's that rascal who despoiled me, who robbed me, at Brussels. Thousand cartridges! I'll make him pay for it."

"Ha! ha! comrade," said Sans-Souci, "it didn't take you long to recognize him. It's disagreeable, I admit, but it's necessary to make him dance, and — forward!"

Dufresne saw that stratagem was of no avail, and that he had no other resource than flight. Jacques was still busied with Adeline, who had not recovered her senses. There was only Sans-Souci to stop him; but Dufresne was strong and robust, Sans-Souci was small and thin. The former immediately took his course; he threw himself upon his adversary and whirled him to the floor before he realized where he was, jumped over him, opened the door, and flew down the stairs four at a time. But Louise had accompanied Jacques and Sans-Souci to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges; the farm people had come to invite Madame Murville to a little gathering they were to hold in honor of Guillot's birthday. On entering the court, and not perceiving the gardener, the farmer's wife had gone to the kitchen to inquire about madame, while Jacques and Sans-Souci

awaited her at the foot of the stairs. Hearing cries in the house, they ran up to Adeline's aid.

In his flight Dufresne encountered Louise, who was coming upstairs; he pushed her roughly, and she fell right under his feet; while he was trying to pass her, Sans-Souci, who had picked himself up, furious at having been vanquished by such a wretch, ran down, and with his walnut stick dealt a shower of blows on Dufresne's head and shoulders, which the latter had not time to parry. He sought to save himself by running towards the garden; Sans-Souci followed; but Dufresne, who knew all the turns, stole away from his enemy's sight until he came to a wall ornamented with a trellis, which he climbed, let himself down into the fields, and fled towards Paris, cursing this disagreeable encounter.

Sans-Souci returned towards the house when he perceived that his prey had escaped him. Adeline had regained consciousness, thanks to the care of Jacques, who had never left her. She opened her eyes, and saw Jacques at her feet and the farmer's wife at her side.

"Ah, my friends," she said to them in a grateful tone, "if it had not been for you I should have been lost."

"The scoundrel!" said Jacques. "Oh, I have known him for a long time; he formerly robbed —I will tell you all about it, madame."

"Oh, the villain!" said the farmer's wife; "he

pushed me over all in a heap, as if I had been a poodle; but I can assure you that Sans-Souci gave him a pretty beating. Ah, he gave it to him well; one could not see the stick going."

Sans-Souci came in at this moment, wearing an air of vexation.

"Well," queried Jacques, "did you stop him?"

"No; I don't know how he did it, but I lost sight of him in the garden, with which he appeared to be acquainted; I must have turned the wrong corner. But that's all right; he has had a volley. If madame wishes I will scour the fields and search the village."

"No, it is useless," replied Adeline. "I thank you for your zeal; but leave the wretch; I flatter myself that after this he will not dare to make his appearance here again."

"Has he robbed you, madame?" asked Jacques.

"No; he came here on business — brought information; he dared to speak to me of love, and, furious at my contempt, he was about to proceed to the last extremes, when you arrived."

"The scoundrel! Ah, if I find him!"

"Mercy! to think of it! The rascal! I should like to give it to him for touching a sweet, pretty little woman like Madame Murville."

"He had better not kiss you, or even look at you, madame," said Sans-Souci, "or by the battle of Austerlitz the handle of my sabre will serve him to hang his watch on."

Quiet was restored; but Adeline, disconsolate at the loss of her mother, and at what the treacherous Dufresne had said regarding her husband, refused to go to Guillot's fête, much to the disappointment of the people of the farm. In vain Louise and her companions tried to change her resolution; sadly they were compelled to return without Madame Murville, and leave her a prey to the grief by which she seemed overwhelmed.

Jacques and Sans-Souci offered to pass the night in the basement of her house, in order to defend her against any new attacks on the part of the scoundrel who had escaped them; but Adeline would not consent; she thanked them and assured them she had nothing more to fear, but invited them to return on the following evening.

The people of the farm departed sorrowfully, and Jacques promised himself that he would watch over his brother's wife.

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He noticed that he was in front of a lottery office.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY WILLIAM GLACKENS.

CHAPTER IV

The Lottery Office

"How does it come about that I have ruined myself at play, while everyone else whom I see wins? I wonder if I shall ever be able to find a sure and speedy method of enriching myself as so many other people do?"

So communed Edouard Murville with himself upon that day upon which Dufresne had departed for Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, as he left an academy,—a decorously delusive name for a gambling hell,—where he had just lost a part of the sum he had borrowed on his house. He walked ill-humoredly about the streets of Paris, tortured by the thought of the complete ruin which stared him in the face; he cogitated on play,—martingales, sequences, double stakes, and all the unfortunate combinations and false hopes which incessantly trouble the brain of a gambler and delude him to his undoing.

A burst of noisy music, the sound of a big drum, of two clarinets, and some cymbals, startled him from his revery; raising his eyes, that he might avoid the musicians whose din wearied him, he noticed that he was in front of a lottery office.

The music he heard was that of some strolling musicians, who, for a piece of forty sous paid by the keeper of the lottery, will make an infernal din and draw all the gossips of the neighborhood before the shop, where a list of the series of two numbers, of three numbers, and even of the four numbers, which somebody is supposed to have won, is hung on the door, with an exact statement of the amount of each prize; all enlivened with favors of pink and blue, like the confectioners' sugarplums.

Edouard stopped mechanically, and, like the others, examined the seductive placard. Seventy-five thousand francs won with twenty sous! It is very inviting. It is true that somebody had four numbers, which is very rare; but sometimes it happens, and one may chance on it as well as another.

"Ah, neighbor, what a fine drawing!" said a fishmonger to a fruiterer who stood near Edouard, copying the amount of the prizes.

"Eleven, twenty, forty-four, nineteen, seventy-six. Ah, I ought to be as rich as a queen today. Here for a year I have followed a losing trey on the first three numbers that are drawn, and the day before yesterday the drawing closed. I was waiting for Thomas, who works in the poultry market, and was to bring me a goose stuffed with chestnuts for supper for the pair of us, with some sixteen-sous wine, — at Eustache's, at the Green

Bars. He has a pretty shop. I was going to make a little supper in a private room, that brings good luck, and to change my investment before coming home to sleep. But that was not for me. Thomas made me dance attendance waiting on him. All out of patience, I went to his room and found he had colic from waltzing too much on Sunday at the apprentices' ball, and I was obliged to care for him; the hour of closing passed, and I forgot my losing trey in preparing embrocations for him."

"Poor Françoise! that was having bad luck indeed. My late husband would have had to rub his stomach himself before I would have forgotten my investments. For ten years I have not failed to pay my rent with twenty sous; this time it was a little overdue, but all the same I had it. I had to pawn my counterpane to get my ticket, but I would rather have sold my chemise than not have had it; I was bent on that."

"Do you know any of those who won big prizes?"

"Why, the novelty merchant's cook. Three numbers taken by chance from the wheel; that's what it is to be lucky. But it isn't surprising; she dreamed of something unpleasant and took the number of her dream."

"Well, that's sure money. I'm unlucky; I never can dream of unpleasant things."

"Oh, I used to dream of them often, in my deceased husband's time."

Edouard departed, pushing his way through the hurrying crowd which surged before the lottery-office door, and walked on, thinking of the lots which had been drawn. This manner of gaining riches is not so quick as roulette; the chances offer fewer probabilities; but the results are more advantageous, since with a small piece of money one may win a considerable sum.

He passed the day meditating on the lottery, and the next day he decided to tempt fortune in this novel way. He entered the first lottery office he found on his way, and he did not go very far before coming to one; for one sees more lottery offices than boards of charity.

It was ten o'clock in the morning. It was the closing of a foreign lottery. The office was full, and so large was the crowd that one had great difficulty in entering, and it was necessary to form in line in order to go and change one's money for some scraps of paper.

Edouard decided to wait. He glanced at the crowd which surrounded him; it was almost entirely composed of those from the lowest grades, — hawkers, cooks, stocking-menders, cobblers, street messengers and rag-pickers. This does not mean that among the superior classes none patronize lotteries; but society people send someone else to the lottery office, and clerks and small shopkeepers enter slyly by a private door.

Edouard held his handkerchief to his nose, for

this gathering of good folks exhaled an odor that was anything but gratifying to the nostrils; and the chimney-sweeper's soot, the fishwife's herring, the cobbler's wax, the cook's whiting, formed an aggregation of smells that would have made a grenadier recoil. But the frequenters of a lottery office are so engrossed in their calculations that they do not notice anything else.

While awaiting their turn, the habitués gathered together to recount their dreams and their ideas. Everyone spoke at once, — but there everyone is right, — and there was a frightful noise, despite the efforts of the mistress of the bureau, who cried every five minutes like the court crier, "Silence there in the corner!" "Be quiet, ladies; one cannot hear one's self speak."

Edouard, who was not a frequenter of such places, was stunned by the prattle of the gossips, who gabbled incessantly; but fortune cannot be bought too dear, and he took his stand and resolved to profit by what he should hear.

"My dear," said an old woman in rags and tatters, to another who held her footstove under her arm, "I saw, while fasting, a gray spider behind my cot bed."

"Oh, mercy! I see spiders every day in our house."

"All the same, it brings good luck, and I shall put a crown on the nine, thirty and fifty-one; I am sure they won't pass the circuit."

And the miserable creature, who had no stockings on, and whose skirt was full of rips, drew a crown from her pocket to put on the numbers which represented her spider. For those who believe in dreams the numbers are in their eyes,— not merely numbers, but the objects they have seen in their dreams, which are all represented by numbers, thanks to the dream book, to the little Cagliostro, to the "Lucky Blindman" and a thousand other pretty little works, all of them about the same in their scope and purpose, and all of which the ticket holders know by heart. The lottery-keeper also knows his business, and understands how, when a coupon buyer is worthy the trouble, to calculate on the fogs of the Seine. One may make one's speculations by the simple mention of one's dreams.

"Monsieur, put this on my beeves," said an oysterman, offering a thirty-sous piece.

"Monsieur, put twenty-four sous for me on a white cat."

"Monsieur, put this for me on my aunt's dressing-sacque."

"My good mother, put mine on some anchovies, first issue."

"Make me a series of three with artichokes."

"My boy, I saw horses all night trotting in my room, — a whole stableful."

"What color were they?" asked the lottery clerk, with a gravity that was almost comic.

"Wait! I think they were dappled. No, they were black."

"That's twenty-four. Were they saddled?"

"I believe you."

"That's twenty-three. Did they run fast?"

"As fast as they do at the circus."

"That's seventy-two."

"Well, figure it all out for me. With a dream like that I can't fail to ride in my carriage."

"I dreamed something still funnier. I was in the country, where they had cows which danced round with the shepherds and the shepherdesses, and the houses were made of gingerbread."

"Fine! One could get fat by licking the walls."

"Let her go on, you silly thing."

"So then I dreamed I was walking by a river whose waters boiled and frothed like pot-au-feu."

"And you took the fish out already cooked, I suppose."

"Keep still, can't you, chatterbox! Then I saw on the other side of the river a pretty palace that rose out of the ground, as they do at the Funambules; the roofs were made of diamonds, the walls of gold, the windows of silver, and the doors of rubies."

"The deuce! That took the shine out of your gingerbread houses."

"When I saw it I asked my boatman, who was a handsome young man, to row me over to the palace."

"Oh, well, that's a good dream; all that means more than a trifle."

"Ladies, will you be so kind?" said a cook, who stuck in her basket a pullet she had just bought, which, judging by its odor, she had taken for a woodcock; "but my master is waiting for his chocolate; he wishes to go out early, and I haven't lit my fire yet. — Quick, madame; my usual speculation. Here are thirty sous; give it me quickly, I beg."

The cook took her ticket and returned to her master's house, making on the way her little calculations. The pullet had cost her fifty sous, which she counted as four livres six sous; in this way her speculation cost her nothing, which was very pleasant. Of course her master ate a stale fowl instead of a fresh one; but it is necessary to have one's profits, and every first-rate cook knows how to make her market penny.

"The considerations are strongly in favor of the ancients," said a little man who had been studying the board for three-quarters of an hour; "they are excellent to play by single numbers."

"Wait," said another; "do you notice that the six is prisoner? It will be drawn presently."

"The two has arrived; that brings back the twenty."

"The thirty-nine has a hundred and three drawings; it is nothing very good. The zeros have not drawn anything for a long time."

"That's so; I bet they will come by ones or twos."

"Like the four came in the circuit. Monsieur, had I followed my first idea, I should have had a series of two figures at Strasbourg. I must tell you that when my wife dreams of a baby, the number forty-four never fails to win. Well, she dreamed that the other night. I have a dog which I have taught to draw the numbers from a bag; he begins to take them very well with one paw. He drew forty-six for me, and I wished to put that with the number of my wife's dream. We talked about it all day; she wanted to put in its place the number of her birthday, which is approaching, and you see my dog's number goes with that of her dream. Ah, I wouldn't part with that animal for a hundred crowns."

"My dear," said an old barley-sugar vender, "I'm sharper than you are; I've a talisman."

"A talisman?"

"Yes, certainly; a fortune-teller gave me the secret of it."

"What is this wonderful talisman?" cried all the gossips at the same time.

"A scrap of virgin parchment, on which I wrote some characters with my blood."

"Ah, mon Dieu! But that is worse than at the Ambigu. Ah, now, what do your characters mean?"

"Ah, my faith! I don't know anything about

them; they are Hebrew — or so she said to me."

"Take care, Javotte, don't trust to it; it's perhaps an invocation to the devil, and your talisman may send you right straight to hell."

"Bah! I'm not afraid of anything, and I shan't give my little parchment up; I'm a philosopher."

"Is she foolish — with her talisman!" said the gossips, when Javotte had gone. "It's surprising if that brings her good luck; she owes everybody in the neighborhood and she can't pay. But it's getting near market time and I haven't set out my goods for sale."

"And I ought to be at the Fontaine des Innocents."

"Ah, good Heaven! that makes me remember that my children are not up yet, and I am sure they are crying, — the little rogues! — and their porridge has been on the fire since eight o'clock."

"It'll be pretty well stuck to the bottom."

"I must save it. Good-by, neighbors!"

"Good-by, till this afternoon; we shall have the list if everything turns out right."

In the midst of this chorus, pushed by one, pressed by another, deafened by everyone, Edouard waited three-quarters of an hour for his turn to come. At last he was at the desk; all that he had heard as to the considerations, the ancients, the fortunate and the prisoners was running riot in his head; but, not knowing which to choose,

he put twenty francs on the first numbers that came into his mind, and at length left the office with his hope in his pocket.

While on his way he met some ill-dressed individuals who offered him fifty louis in gold for twelve sous. These gentlemen, or ladies, apparently disdained for themselves the wealth which they offered so cheaply to the passers-by. But Murville refused all their offers. He had in his pocket all that was necessary to him; already he was building castles in the air, for his numbers were excellent,—so the lottery clerk had informed him,—and he could not fail to draw a prize. He would rehabilitate his affairs, he should live in fine style, attach to himself the prettiest women, and even the most expensive ones, which would vex Madame de Geran; finally, he would refuse himself nothing.

But the lottery was drawn, and at three o'clock the list was placed before the lottery offices. Edouard, who was walking impatiently before the one where he had been in the morning, hastily approached the board; he looked at the list and perceived that he had won nothing.

CHAPTER V

Good Friends

As for Dufresne, he left the village, his heart filled with rage and disappointment, and his head with plans of vengeance. The hope that the beautiful Adeline would consent to yield the virtuous womanhood of a good wife and mother to his brutal passion no longer agitated him; he felt that that was henceforth impossible. It was only by the most infamous stratagem, in the first place, that he had accomplished his criminal purpose, but Adeline remained no less virtuous, though he had effectively ruined her happiness. Vainly he had hoped, by the detestable means he had adopted, to change the sentiments of Edouard's wife, to make her love him; her detestation, her abhorrence of him was only increased. She wept for a crime she had not committed; she had lost her husband's love; she was about to be reduced to poverty. What further blows could he inflict upon her?

Dufresne's counsels were no longer necessary to induce Edouard to play; the unhappy man did not allow a single day to pass without visiting the gambling dens which abound in the capital. In

these haunts he sought to forget his painful situation by plunging himself deeper and deeper into the abyss. The money obtained by means of the last notes he had hypothecated had followed the rest of his fortune, which had been divided between Madame de Geran, roulette, trente-et-un, the demi-monde and sharpers. What could he do now to procure the means of gratifying his shameful propensities? His notes would shortly fall due, and he could not meet them; they would sell his house in the country; his wife and his child would no longer have a roof to shelter them, and would be as entirely without resources as he was himself. But this did not trouble him; he thought only of himself; and if he tried to obtain money, it was not that he might contribute to the support of his family. No, he no longer remembered the sacred ties that bound him to an amiable and beautiful wife. His fatal passion for play had made him entirely forget that he was a husband and a father.

Obliged to leave the lodging he had occupied in a very respectable hotel, he took up his abode with Dufresne. The latter had been very uneasy for some days after his return from the country; he was fearful lest Jacques should follow him to Paris, and, to evade his pursuit, he changed his name, and induced his companion to do likewise. Dufresne therefore assumed the name of Courval, and Edouard that of Monbrun. Under these

cognomens they lodged at a wretched hotel in the Faubourg Saint Jacques, having, as their only associates, tricksters, and people without character or position, who, like Dufresne, had reasons to fear publicity.

Three weeks after Madame Germeuil's death, all that she had left had been engulfed, and the pair were obliged to resort to new expedients every day to procure the means of subsistence.

One evening, when Edouard had remained at home with Dufresne, not having money wherewith to play, and racking his brains for a means of getting some, somebody knocked at their door, and a good-for-nothing fellow named Lampin, worthy of being an intimate friend of Dufresne, entered the room with a joyful mien, holding four bottles under his arms.

"Oh, is that you, Lampin?" said Dufresne, opening the door to his friend, and making certain signs to which he responded, which Edouard, who was buried in reflection, did not notice.

"Yes, gentlemen, it's me. — Come, comrade Monbrun; quit your dreaming; I've brought you something to make you cheerful."

"What is that you have there?"

"Some wine, brandy and rum."

"The deuce! you must be in funds."

"My faith! I won ten francs at biribi, and I came to drink it with friends."

"Good enough! Just the very thing! You're

a good fellow, Lampin. Monbrun and I were as dismal as empty pockets."

"Let's have a drink first; that'll put you in better shape; we'll talk later."

He placed the bottles on the table, around which the three gentlemen seated themselves, and the glasses were rapidly filled and emptied.

"We haven't a sou, Lampin, and that is an ugly malady."

"Bah! because you're a pair of stupids. Here's your good health!"

"How do you make that out, you booby?"

"Oh, yes; if I had your talents, and, above all, those of Monbrun, I should not be where you are; I should know how to butter my bread."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Edouard, helping himself to brandy. "Come, explain yourself."

"Oh, it's easily understood, my son. I repeat, that if I knew how to write as well as you do, I should make some big speculations. But you are too timorous."

"We have speculated enough; but our speculations have not proved successful."

"But that's not the thing, my young fellow.— Drink, gentlemen; this is famous stuff, anyway."

"But inform us, Lampin, what you would do to—"

"Well, you see, I'm a bold fellow, and don't mind a little risky business; but I write like a cat."

"What do you wish to write, then?"

"That's according to circumstances; sometimes one thing, sometimes another. Wait; here's a note that a friend of mine intrusted to me; it is for the sum total of his father's riches, and the latter sent it to him here because he wished to amuse himself with us."

"What is that?"

"A bill of exchange for twelve hundred francs, accepted by a prominent banker in Paris. Oh, there's some profit in that. They'll discount that for you to the last farthing; my chum knows an individual who lives on the outskirts of Paris and who has offered him the equivalent for his paper. Well, my quacks, make me a similar one and they will discount it all the same."

"What do you mean? What are you saying,—counterfeit this bill?"

"Oh, no; not counterfeit it, for in place of twelve hundred francs I should make it twelve thousand; that is only an imitation.—To your health!"

"Wretched man, that is forgery!"

"No, it is not forgery; it is a new bill which we have set in circulation in business circles; that's so—isn't it, Dufresne? That's not forgery. In this case, there's nobody but the banker to swallow it; but those scamps can well afford to make us a little present."

"In fact," said Dufresne, "it is not precisely a

forgery; we create a note, — that is all, — and we make somebody else responsible for its payment."

"That's it, exactly; it's nothing more than a roguish trick. Oh, you understand these little jokes, Dufresne; but Monbrun is a little dull."

"No, no; I understand very well, gentlemen; but I cannot consent to employ similar means. I disapprove of them."

"Yes; oh, well, you won't make your way, my man; and you will starve like the bugs in winter."

"It is very sure that we are entirely without resources," said Dufresne; "we have no linen, no garments, but those which cover us."

"That's all right. Remember in this case that you have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

"And honor?" said Edouard in a weakening voice.

"Honor! Ah, pardieu, I believe that has long taken leave of me. As to Dufresne, he is in the same box with me; he has never been afraid of losing it."

"This devil of a Lampin is always joking. Let us drink, gentlemen."

"Remember, also, that with twelve thousand francs to handle you can make a good deal more. I have found a sure method of winning; it is only necessary to have three hundred louis to win a thousand."

"Is that really so?"

"On the word of an honest man; I will teach you my play and we will share the benefits."

"It's very inviting," said Dufresne, closely examining the bill of exchange, while Lampin poured some rum for Edouard, on whom the drink was producing a stupefying effect.

"You say, Lampin, that you know a man who would be willing to discount your friend's bill?"

"Yes; he knows that's all right; and as to the other,—it will not appear at all suspicious to him; he will believe that the inheritance is more considerable, and there you are."

"In fact," said Dufresne, "who knows of it?"

"It is entirely between ourselves."

"And our conscience," muttered Edouard.

"Oh, come, he's maudlin, with his conscience. Do you think you are talking to some brats?"

"The most essential thing," said Dufresne, "is to be successful. As for me, if Monbrun wishes to make the body of the note, I will attend to the signatures. I will take all that on myself."

"Well, what have you to say to that, slow coach? Are you still going to make a fuss? You understand he takes everything upon himself. I hope that's treating you like a friend."

"What, Dufresne! are you willing to—"

"My faith! I see no other way of relieving our embarrassment. I repeat to you, there is no risk."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, come on, silly billy, since we tell you that you shall run no risk. Wait, chums; I have with me the proper paper for a bill of exchange, all stamped. Cut some pens, Dufresne, and let us amuse ourselves in making some pothooks and hangers."

"My hand trembles, gentlemen," said Edouard; "I can never write."

"Get out! get out! That's all very well to say; on the contrary — Ah, I should be rich by now if I had known how to write like that; but my education was a little neglected."

"If we should be arrested — recognized as the authors of — "

"Bah! that's impossible; and then, if we were, it would only be a few months in prison, where one can amuse himself and make some acquaintances."

Edouard, led astray by the conversation of his worthless associates, and having long since lost all scrupulousness in the haunts of vice and debauchery, crossed the narrow line that separated him from the wretches who are branded by the law; he stifled the last cry of conscience; he committed the most shameful of crimes.

The bill of exchange was written. Dufresne carefully imitated the signatures, in which he was perfectly successful; they fabricated some endorsers; the unhappy Murville, who allowed himself to be led entirely, disguised his handwriting and

signed on the back of the note the names that were suggested to him.

Lampin was delighted, and for greater safety proposed to carry the note to the one who had offered to discount the note of twelve hundred francs, and who lived in a little town not far from Paris. The matter was arranged thus: Dufresne should accompany Lampin, because these gentlemen had not enough confidence in him to intrust their note to him, and Edouard, who had less effrontery than the others, was to await the result of the matter in Paris.

Everything being arranged, they drank anew, Edouard to drown his thoughts, the others to exhilarate themselves. These gentlemen built castles in the air with their future fortune, and ended by going to sleep with their elbows on the table.

Edouard, who had drunk deeper, and was more easily overcome by the excessive use of liquors and wine than were his companions, did not waken until eight o'clock in the morning. His first thought was of the dishonest action he had committed the evening before. He trembled, for he understood then the full extent of his crime. He sought Dufresne, to beg him to destroy the forged note; but Dufresne was not in; he had gone out with Lampin early in the morning, foreseeing Edouard's remorse, and by his absence putting it out of the latter's power to retrace his steps.

Edouard left his room; he went out, having

no particular destination, but seeking some distraction from the anxieties which besieged him; already he feared that he should be recognized as a criminal; he glanced uncertainly about him; if anyone looked at him in passing, he colored, was uneasy, and believed they were about to arrest him. He vainly endeavored to conquer his terror and weakness; but he could not reassure himself, and he cursed, even then, gold so dearly bought.

At the corner of the street he heard a cry; someone pronounced his name. He doubled his pace without daring to look behind him; but someone ran after him, held him, took him by the arm; he trembled; a cold perspiration broke out on his forehead; he raised his eyes; his wife and child were before him.

"Oh, is it you? I have found you at last," said Adeline. "Ah, I have looked for you a long time."

"You frightened me," said Edouard, who had not recovered from his surprise at this meeting. "But why are you here? Why have you left the country?"

"Your creditors drove me from the house I was living in; it belongs to you no longer. Some time ago the lawyer warned me that your affairs were very much deranged, and that your property was encumbered by numerous loans."

"I know all that, madame; spare me your complaints and your useless reproaches."

"I don't wish to make any; however — O my dear! how you are changed!"

"I have been ill."

"Why did you not write to me? I would have come to care for you."

"I did not need anybody."

"And is it thus you can treat those you have reduced to poverty? I have lost my mother, and I have no longer a husband. I met you only by chance; I have inquired for you in every place where you have lodged, but no one knew anything about you. I have been here for a fortnight, and had lost all hope, when at last I perceived you. Dear Edouard — and this is the way you speak to me; you do not even embrace your child."

"Would you have me afford a spectacle for the passers-by?"

"There would be nothing ridiculous to decent people in the sight of a father caressing his child. But let us go somewhere — into a café."

"I have not time."

"Where are you living?"

"Far from here; and as I was much embarrassed, Dufresne has shared his lodging with me."

"You lodge with Dufresne! — a scoundrel who has already done everything that is base."

"Oh, hold your tongue, and don't weary me with your moralities. I shall do as I wish and associate with whom I please. I permit you to do the same."

"What a tone! what manners!" said Adeline to herself as she looked at Edouard. "Never mind; I will make a last effort.—Monsieur," she said to him, "if it is through need that you are obliged to remain with the wretch who has deceived you, come and live with me; let us leave this city, which recalls so many sad memories, and follow me to some isolated spot. I have nothing now, but I will work; I will work by night and day, if necessary, and I will provide for our subsistence. Even in a poor cottage one may be happy when one bears adversity with courage. Heaven, touched by our resignation, will perhaps take pity on us. You will recover the peace which has fled from you, and I shall recover my husband. Please, Edouard, do not refuse me; come, I entreat you; fly this city, these deceitful counsels and these dangerous acquaintances, lest you should enter the paths of crime."

Edouard was moved; his heart was agitated with remorse and pity; he noticed his child for the first time.

"Well," he said to Adeline, "I will go and see if I can terminate my business. I will follow you."

"What keeps you now?"

"Only one thing—but very important; it is necessary that I should attend to it. Where are you lodging?"

"In an inn, Faubourg Saint Antoine. Wait; here is my address."

"Give it to me; tomorrow I shall see you."

"You promise me?"

"Yes, tomorrow. Good-by! I am obliged to leave you."

Edouard left precipitately, and Adeline sought her dwelling, vibrating between hope and fear. She knew her husband; she knew how little one could rely on his promises; she awaited the morrow with anxiety.

But the next day Dufresne and Lampin returned with the money. The discounter had been their dupe, believing that he recognized the signature of the banker. These gentlemen drew Edouard on; they devoted themselves anew to their passion for wine, women and gambling. They dazzled Edouard; they silenced his remorse, his scruples; they mocked at his fear; and, in place of seeing him for whom she waited, Adeline received a letter from Edouard which contained only these words:—

Do not seek to see me again, and do not hope that I shall bury myself in a cottage with you. All that would not suit me. Leave Paris without me; it is the last command you will receive from your husband, who leaves you entirely your own mistress, free to do what shall seem good to you.

Adeline bathed this letter with her tears.

"You have no longer a father," said she to little Ermance. "Poor child! what will be your lot? Now to leave this city and obey my husband's last commands. We will go to the good

villagers; at the farm they will not repulse us. I shall not have to blush for having to ask work of them. O my mother! if you were still living, I should find consolation in your arms. Ah, if I had but followed your advice, perhaps Edouard— But it is too late. At least you are ignorant of the depth of my sorrows."

Adeline sold all that she could dispense with in her present situation,—some jewels, some flowers, some superfluous articles of dress. A simple gown, a straw hat trimmed with modest ribbon, her baby on one arm and a little bundle under the other,—it was thus that Madame Murville set out for Guillot's farm.

CHAPTER VI

Adeline Finds A Protector

For some long time after Madame Murville's flight the people at the farm were much distressed. Since the day they had driven Dufresne so unceremoniously away from the village, Adeline had been plunged in the most profound dejection and had refused to leave her home; she sought no distraction from the sorrow that consumed her, and all the entreaties of the kindly farm people were not sufficient to induce her to leave her quiet retreat even for a short time.

Jacques knew not what to think of his brother's conduct. He easily divined that the latter had made his wife unhappy; but he was still far from imagining the extent of his excesses. Edouard's brother dared not question Adeline, but she read in his eyes what he felt for her; and her heart recognized his sympathy, and repaid the honest laborer with the most sincere friendship. Every two days Jacques went to the village to inquire after Madame Murville's health. One morning, as according to custom he rang the bell at the gate, the old gardener opened it to him with tears in his eyes.

"What's the matter, Father Forer? Has anything happened to Madame Murville?" asked Jacques with anxiety. "Has that rascal who came the other day been here again?"

"Ah, my good monsieur, several rascals came today, and they have driven my good mistress away."

"Driven her away? How can it be possible?"

"It's true, for all that."

"Were they thieves — robbers?"

"No, monsieur; some sheriff's officers — some creditors — I don't know exactly which. They showed madame some papers, and they told her that this place was hers no longer. The poor woman! — and, making a parcel of some of her belongings, she took her babe on her arm and left."

"Left? she is gone? May he rot! The wretch, who has reduced her to this poverty!"

"Monsieur Jacques, I tell you there were several of them. Wait; see the writing. This house is for sale now, and they left me here, to show it to any who wish to see it."

"And do you know where Madame Murville has gone?"

"Why, she has gone to Paris."

"She has gone to find him."

"Yes; she has undoubtedly gone to join her husband. But listen: between ourselves, they say he is a very bad subject, that he plays all sorts of

pranks at Paris; and you can understand, Monsieur Jacques, that when one has a little young wife as sweet and wise as madame, for, dang it, she's virtue and goodness personified — and then there's the baby, who will be the image of its mother—oh, well, when one has a family like that and can forget them for a whole year, it's bad; it shows that something is wrong."

Jacques, saying good-by to the gardener, gave a last look at the house and departed sadly from the village. A thousand plans beset his mind: he would go to Paris in search of Adeline; he would speak to his brother and reproach him for his bad conduct; he would make him ashamed of leaving his wife unprotected, uncared for. Still steeped in these thoughts he reached the farm. They questioned Jacques; like him, they were distressed, but they still hoped that Madame Murville would return in the evening. Sans-Souci shared this hope; he calmed his comrade and invited him to wait for some days before doing anything.

Jacques' patience was almost exhausted; he was about to leave the farm and start for Paris, when one morning the joyful cries of the children announced that something unusual had happened. Adeline had arrived at the farm with her little Ermance. Everybody ran to meet her; they surrounded her, they pressed about her, they kissed her, they frankly expressed their joy; Adeline, touched at these evidences of the attachment of

these good people, discovered that she could still experience pleasure.

"Ah," she said, "I have not lost everything, since such good friends remain to me."

Jacques was beside himself; he took Adeline's hands and kissed them; he swore, he shouted, he stamped his feet, and turned to hide his tears. Sans-Souci, delighted at Adeline's return, and at the pleasure which his comrade evinced, jumped, capered about among the ducks and hens, and smacked the children, something that happened only when he was in very good humor.

"My friends," said Adeline, as they gathered about her, "I am not what I once was; unfortunate events have deprived me of my fortune. I have nothing but courage to support my reverses —and my conscience, which tells me I have not deserved them. I must now work to earn my own and my child's living. You welcomed me when I was rich, and you will not repulse me now I am poor; and I come confidently to ask you to give me work. Ah, do not refuse me, for only on those terms can I consent to stay here."

While Adeline was speaking, compassion was depicted in the faces of all who surrounded her. Louise could not restrain her tears; Guillot, with mouth gaping and eyes fixed on Madame Murville, gave vent every moment to a big sigh; and Sans-Souci twisted his mustache, in order that he might pass his hands over his eyes.

But Jacques, more deeply moved, more sympathetic, on seeing the resignation of this charming woman, who was about to bury herself on a farm, renouncing all the pleasures of town and all the habits of society, without uttering a reproach against the one who had caused her misfortune—brave Jacques could no longer contain himself; he brushed aside Louise and Guillot, who were close to Adeline, and, warmly shaking the young woman's hand, while she looked at him in surprise,—

"No, by George!" cried he; "you shall not work, you shall not expose your health, you shall not wither that soft skin by working beyond your strength. I charge myself with the maintenance of you and the child; I will protect you; I will watch over you, and, while there is a drop of blood in my veins, I shall do my duty."

"What are you saying, Jacques? Your duty?"

"Yes, madame, yes,—my duty. My brother has brought misfortune upon you, and the least I can do is to consecrate my existence to you and to seek to repair his errors."

"You are—"

"Jacques Murville, the boy who at fifteen years of age began his wanderings, moved by a wilful spirit, by a desire to see the world, and, I confess, between ourselves, grief at his mother's coldness, and jealousy at seeing the caresses she lavished upon his brother, and which she unjustly denied

him; for the rest, possessing a heart sensitive to honor, which in the midst of the follies of my youth I have never discarded. That is my history; kiss me, sister; I feel worthy of your friendship, which you can accord me without blushing."

Adeline pressed Jacques in her arms; she experienced the most vivid pleasure at finding thus her husband's brother, and the villagers uttered joyful exclamations of surprise, while Sans-Souci shouted at the top of his voice, rubbing his hands meanwhile, —

"I knew it; I knew it; but my comrade made me keep my mouth shut, and I would not have let a word escape me for all the meerschaums of the Great Mogul."

"But why did you so long hide from me the tie that unites us?" asked Adeline of Jacques. "Could you doubt my pleasure in greeting my husband's brother?"

"No," answered Jacques; "but I wished to know you well first; people often are ashamed of their relations."

"Ah, my friend, when one wears the cross of honor, is it possible for him to be afraid that they should be ashamed of him?"

"Thousand bombshells! that is what I tired myself out trying to tell him all the time; but he's a little stubborn, is my comrade, and when he once gets a thing into his head he won't give it up."

"You find me now I can be useful to you, and that is all that is necessary. Kiss me again, and hereafter look upon me as your brother and as the father of this poor little one, since he who should love and cherish you has not a heart like other people, since he is unworthy of — Come, come; you wish me to be silent, I can see. Well, here's an end of it; we will speak of him no more; we will try to forget him."

"Ah," said Adeline, "if he had seen you, if he had found his brother, perhaps your advice — "

"If he had seen me! Hold! leave all that. Forget a wretch who is not worth one of the tears that you shed for him."

"Yes, yes; be gay, be joyful," said Guillot. "Dang it, it's not necessary to be always sorrowful; it makes people stupid. Come to table, and this evening, to amuse us, Brother Jacques shall tell us about one of his battles. That's very diverting; when I have heard it I dream all night of combats."

After the meal they busied themselves with the preparations necessary for Adeline's stay at the farm. Louise made ready for Madame Murville a little room which looked out upon the country; she tried to make it as pleasant as she possibly could, and carried to it all the prettiest pieces of furniture they had at the farm. In vain Adeline objected to all that; when Louise had resolved upon anything, it must be so; she would not

listen to the young woman, who besought good Louise not to treat her as in any way different from a poor villager; but the latter wished to make Madame Murville forget her change of fortune and redoubled the zeal and affection of her service. Jacques did not thank the good farmer's wife, but he took her hands and pressed them tenderly every time she did something for his sister; and Sans-Souci cried, while slapping Guillot's back, —

"Hang it, cousin, you've got a clever wife; she manages finely."

"That's true enough," said Guillot; "I don't interfere, even about the children; and, dang it, they are growing up well all the same."

Thus was Adeline installed at the farm; she was a good needlewoman, and Louise was forced to allow her to employ herself all day either with her sewing or spinning. Jacques had felt that his strength was redoubled since his brother's wife and his little niece were with him. He did as much as any three men on the farm. He had become very expert in all farm work, and augmented the farmer's profits by the care he bestowed on everything he undertook; as for Sans-Souci, he imitated his comrade; he was ashamed to remain inactive while the other people were so busily employed. Everything prospered at the farm; Guillot and his wife scolded Adeline because she worked too hard, and forbade Jacques to put himself to so

much trouble; but they did not listen, and had the sweet satisfaction of knowing that they were no burden on the good villagers.

Some months rolled by without bringing any change to those at the farm. Adeline would have been contented with her lot if she could have forgotten her husband; but she still loved the one who had caused her misfortunes, and the memory of Edouard came constantly to trouble her peace. "What is he doing now?" she said to herself every day, and the thought that Dufresne was with him added to her trouble and doubled her anxieties. Often she formed the plan of going to Paris to ascertain what her husband was doing; but she feared to vex Jacques, who, greatly irritated as he was at Edouard, would not hear his name mentioned, and had begged Adeline to have nothing more to do with him.

Jacques feigned an indifference which was far from his heart. Secretly he thought of his brother; he was indignant at Edouard's treatment of his wife and daughter, but he would have given all the world to see him repent his errors and come to implore the forgiveness which they were ready to bestow.

Thus Adeline and Jacques did not express the thoughts which occupied them, because each feared to grieve the other by renewing the memory of their sorrow. Sans-Souci was the confidant of both. Guillot sometimes had errands to Paris,

either to sell his grains or to buy necessaries for the farm. Sans-Souci was always the one sent on these occasions, because Jacques had refused to go, for fear he should meet his brother.

But each time Sans-Souci was about to go to the capital, Adeline took him apart and begged him to learn, if he could, what her husband was doing; Jacques dared not say anything to his comrade, but he rejoined Sans-Souci outside the farmhouse, and, stopping him for a moment, said in a low voice, —

"If you learn anything unpleasant in regard to the one whom we do not mention, keep silent. Sacrebleu! if you breathe a word of it to my sister, you are no longer my friend."

Sans-Souci left, charged with the double commission; but he returned, having learned nothing. Edouard had changed his name, and nobody could say where he had gone to.

CHAPTER VII

Audacity. Cowardice. Drunkenness The Place du Palais

Fortune, that fickle goddess, whose moods are not to be accounted for, seemed to smile anew on the wretches who in courting her had sacrificed their honor and defied all the laws of society,—thus furnishing by their success a new temptation, which pushed them further into crime and prevented their turning back. The ease with which they had acquired a large sum of money by their concerted forgery and discount of the note seemed to guarantee their impunity for the future. The guilty harden themselves in crime, and those who enter tremblingly upon a career of vice are soon despoiled of all shame, and seek to surpass those who have led them to dishonor.

Play, which Edouard now followed with more avidity than ever, for though it had caused his ruin it was now his last hope of repairing his means, ceased to be contrary to him; he won, and the unhappy man congratulated himself on having at last found an expedient to evoke fortune. Dufresne and Lampin taught him all the nefarious methods in use among cheats to play a sure game

with those very foolish people who took a hand with them. These gentlemen laughed continually among themselves at the expense of the dupes whom they were ruining, and each one sought to invent the biggest knaveries in order to surpass his comrade.

Lampin lived with his two friends. Dufresne had impressed upon Edouard the necessity of their avoiding a quarrel with him; for Lampin possessed a fertile imagination for tricks and stratagems, and was a great help to these intriguers.

When fortune was favorable or when they had found some new dupe, they thought of nothing but amusing themselves; these gentlemen drew to themselves disreputable women of the lowest order, and gave themselves up to the most disgusting orgies.

One evening, when they were only awaiting Lampin's appearance to seat themselves at table, the latter arrived laughing, and hastened to inform his friends, as a good joke, that a certain bill of exchange had been recognized as false, and that the discounter wanted his money. Edouard was quite alarmed, and turned pale; but Dufresne reassured him, reasoning with him that nobody could ever discover them, since they had changed their name and dwelling; that no one could recognize them; that no one could prove that they had produced it between them; that Lampin alone would be looked for, and he had a talent for

changing his face and his whole person, which would enable him to snap his fingers at the police.

Edouard was not easy; he endeavored, however, to distract his thoughts and drive away his fears. Two female associates of these gentlemen came in opportunely to enliven the evening.

"Deuce take it," said Lampin, "Veronique the Blonde will have something funny to tell us; she always knows the most spicy news; she'll put our friend Bellecour (Edouard's new alias) in good humor again; he's a little out of sorts this evening."

"Ah, I'm in no mood for joking," answered Veronique, sighing; "I'm also feeling under the weather today."

"Seems to me you ought to be used to all weather."

"Oh, don't talk foolishly. I really feel sad."

"You don't say so. Have you quarrelled with the messenger?"

"It's not that, but I have a friend who is implicated in a bad business."

"What business? Perhaps we could help her out."

"Oh, no; the law has her in its clutches, although the poor thing is as innocent as you or I."

"Pshaw! that's saying a good deal. But let's know what troubles her."

"You know my friend, who has not been one of us long, was formerly a chambermaid in several

houses; among others, she was in the service of a young widow, who is dead now and has been for some time. Well, some persons were ill-advised enough to say in the neighborhood that this lady's death was caused by poison; these reports came to the ears of justice; they disinterred the corpse, and the doctor said the same as the neighbors. Upon this they made some investigations, and they arrested my comrade because she was then in the service of that lady; but the poor girl is as guiltless as this glass of wine, I swear to you."

Dufresne listened attentively to Veronique the Blonde's story, and Lampin flirted with the other damsel; while Edouard, who had fallen into deep reflection regarding the affair of the forgery, of which he felt himself guilty, had thrown himself into an easy-chair in a corner of the room without listening to a history which was not interesting to him in any way.

"This affair seems very singular to me," said Dufresne, drawing his chair close to Veronique; "but what is your friend's name?"

"Suzanne; upon my word she's a good-hearted girl, incapable of hurting a hair of anyone's head."

At the name Suzanne, Dufresne looked uneasy; but, immediately recovering himself, he looked around the room and perceived that Murville had heard nothing, that Lampin was occupied, and he continued to question Veronique.

"It seems to me that your Suzanne will have a

good deal of trouble in extricating herself from this mess, if, as you say, she was the lady's only domestic."

"Oh, that's all right; Suzanne suspects someone who had an opportunity to do the business."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, my dear; a young man used to come to this widow's,—her lover,—a gambler, a scoundrel, a money-grubber."

"Good! good! I understand. And what follows?"

"This poor woman ruined herself for this good-for-nothing scamp. Wait, now; I know her name,—Madame Don—Dol—"

"Well, well," said Dufresne, interrupting Veronique brusquely; "I don't need to know her name."

"That's so; it won't help the matter. At last the lady became madly fond of her lover, who did not care for her at all, and squandered all that she had. It seems that toward the end they fell out, and the monster poisoned her to revenge himself because she declared she would expose all his misdeeds."

"That's probable enough."

"Ah, the men of today are scoundrelly dogs; they would as soon kill a woman for you as a fly."

"And what statement does your friend Suzanne make?"

"Oh, she has already told everything to the

magistrates that will put them on the guilty man's track. I don't know where he is at present."

"That's good; I hope that they'll discover the truth."

Dufresne pronounced these words in a half-voice. Despite the assurance that he affected, his change of expression betrayed the agitation of his feelings.

The party broke up earlier than usual; Edouard was uneasy, and Dufresne also appeared anxious. They dismissed the two damsels. Lampin, who alone had preserved his gayety, poured great bumpers, drinking to his friends in mockery of their despondency; Edouard drank to deaden his sensibilities; but Dufresne was not disposed to join them, and Lampin fuddled himself alone, trying in vain to set his companions laughing.

"Come now, among friends this won't do," said he, as he replenished the glasses. "You are as serious this evening as if you were going to be hung. I can forgive Bellecour, who's nothing but a milksop; but our friend down there, — Vermontre, Courval, Dufresne — anything you like."

"Silence, fool!" cried Dufresne, angrily; "I forbid you to call me by that name now."

"You forbid me! Wait, — see now; you look as if you could kill somebody. You called yourself by that name formerly, when you lived with that poor Dolban. I can very well believe that you loved her, and who — "

"Silence, drunkard!"

"Drunkard! Ah, do you think that you do right to call me a drunkard? — you who slept last night under the table; you who drink punch like a trout. But that's all right; I'm never angry with friends — for at least we are friends. I can see very well that you are, both of you, in a very bad humor, — Edouard because that scrap of paper troubles him, and you — ah, my faith! I don't know of anything, unless it's some martingale you should have spoilt, or some friend you should have taken in, or — well, it's — oh, but what was that Veronique was telling you about poisoning — her widow — her lover who was not her lover? Wait; that's as like as one drop of water to another to your affair with the old Dolban. If it was you who — Ha! ha! ha! you would be quite capable of a joke of that kind."

"Get to bed, Lampin; you see that Edouard's already asleep; you'll waken him with your chucklings."

"Oh, well, if I should waken him, would that be a great misfortune? The devil! you're amusing with your finicky way this evening; but I will chuckle; I will laugh and drink, — and I will not go to bed — do you hear? I feel in good spirits; I am vexed that I let our vestals go. I'm a man who will have his own way. Tra, la, la, la — "

"Aren't you going to bed at all tonight?"

"I shall go to bed when I please, slyboots.

Oh, I can see you're in a bad humor. I tell you, you hide your business from us; Veronique's story has altogether dried up your speech, my poor Dufresne."

"Be silent, wretch!" exclaimed Dufresne, seizing Lampin by the throat. The latter struggled, recoiled, and fell over Edouard, who had been asleep in a corner of the room, and who, suddenly wakened, looked affrightedly about him, and cried, "They are here! they are here! They are going to arrest me!"

"To arrest you!" said Dufresne, in his turn; "and for what?"

"Ha! ha! how stupid they are!" cried Lampin, picking himself up and trying to regain his equilibrium; "that one is dreaming, and the other one can't see anything."

"Then it was only a dream," said Edouard, passing his hand over his forehead.

"Why, yes; you are two brats. But let me advise you not to play again at squeezing my windpipe, or I shall be angry all right."

"It's getting late, masters," said Dufresne; "I am tired and I'm going to bed."

"Oh, well, go; our friend will keep me company in finishing this flask of rum."

"No, I shall go to bed also; I'm half asleep already."

"Go your own road; I shall have to drink alone."

"Once more, Lampin, don't make so much noise; you'll disturb the neighbors."

"Let the neighbors go about their business; I don't care a fig for them; and I'll make a still bigger racket. Tra, la, la, la—"

Lampin sang at the top of his voice, and drank a large glass of rum; Dufresne and Edouard took some candles to go to their bedroom, when someone knocked loudly three times at the street door.

Dufresne started with terror, Edouard listened tremblingly, and Lampin, laughing, threw himself into an armchair.

"Somebody knocked," said Edouard, looking at Dufresne.

"Yes, I heard it."

"Why, yes, I heard it too; I'm not deaf; besides, they knocked loud enough. But what's that got to do with us? We're not expecting anyone; it's nearly three o'clock in the morning; at least it can't be our maids come back to rock us to sleep."

"Hush! somebody is opening the door, I think."

"They must open the door if anybody is to come in. It's a lodging-house—a house of this class—are people to stay out all night? However, come what will, I mock at them and drink."

"I hear nothing more," said Dufresne. "Oh, it is not for us."

Edouard went and stood close to the door which

opened on to the staircase and listened attentively. Lampin began to sing again, and tried to convey his glass to his lips with a hand that was too unsteady to carry it. All of a sudden Edouard appeared more agitated.

"What is it now?" demanded Dufresne in a low voice.

"I hear the murmur of several voices;—the sound draws nearer. Yes, they are coming upstairs. Ah, there is no doubt they are coming to arrest us; we are discovered."

"Silence! Don't be so imprudent," said Dufresne, trying to overcome his real terror. "If they are indeed coming here, we need not be anxious —and take care what you say; above all, don't call me Dufresne."

"I don't know what I am doing," remarked Edouard, whose fear increased measurably as the noise approached.

"Eh, well—here am I—I don't know my own name," said Lampin, letting his glass fall; "but I tell you—that they're not coming for us."

At this moment somebody rang at the door of the flat. Edouard fell limply into a chair; Dufresne remained motionless in the middle of the room, making a sign to the others not to budge. Soon they rang again, and knocked loudly.

"There's nobody here," cried Lampin. "Go to the devil!"

"Come," remarked Dufresne, "we must open. — Who's there?"

"Open, men, or we shall be forced to break in the door."

"Break, my friends!" said Lampin. "That's all right; the house doesn't belong to me."

Dufresne, seeing that he had no means of retreat, decided to open, after signing to the others to be careful; but Lampin was befogged by drink, and Edouard had lost his wits.

Some gendarmes and a police officer came into the room. At sight of them Dufresne paled, Edouard uttered an exclamation of fright, and Lampin rolled from his chair on to the floor.

"You must follow us, monsieur," said the policeman, addressing Dufresne, who tried to put a good face on the matter, and boldly asked by what right they came to disturb him.

"Yes — by what right — you disturb honest men in their enjoyment," murmured Lampin. "I answer for my friend — body for body."

"Your caution is useless; we know you, Master Lampin."

"Eh, well — we have a pretty acquaintance, I flatter myself."

"You will follow us also."

"Me? Ah, that will be difficult; I couldn't walk a step for a bowl of punch; do you fancy I can do it to get to prison?"

"As to you, monsieur," said the police officer

to Edouard, "I have no order to arrest you, but I advise you to choose better acquaintances for the future."

Edouard remained trembling, and with his eyes cast down, in a corner of the room. He did not understand what was said to him; he was so firmly persuaded that they had come to take him away that he believed himself already immured in a cell, and decided to confess his crime, in the hope that his frankness would disarm his judges.

Dufresne, furious at finding himself arrested, and that Edouard was not to follow him to prison, said, —

"You are mistaken, gentlemen; I have done nothing for which I should be arrested."

"You are Dufresne, who lived with Madame Dolban."

"You're mistaken; my name is Vermontre."

"Oh, yes, that's true," said Lampin, trying to pick himself up without the help of the gendarmes; "for two months he's been called by that name."

"It's vain for you to deny it. For a long time past you have been under the surveillance of the police, and, on learning this new crime of which you are accused, it has not been difficult for us to find you, despite the many aliases you have taken."

"A crime! — a crime!" cried Lampin, in his turn. "One moment, messieurs; that matter doesn't concern me. I thought you came about

the matter of some scraps of paper — that's nothing but a trifle. But a crime! The deuce! let us understand each other. I am as white as snow, and Fluet, who is there in the corner, will tell you as much. We've done nothing, we others, except the writings."

"The writings?"

"Yes — when I say we — it's that Valeur — who trembles over there, who wrote the most of it; but he writes prettily.— Ah, that was smart, and the old Jew was taken in so well that — we have eaten and drunk the cash. So if you wish for our company, I'm your man."

The police officer listened attentively, and the terror of Edouard, joined to Lampin's rambling talk, made him comprehend that these gentlemen were the authors of some roguery of another kind than the affair on which he had come; it was for the crime committed on Madame Dolban that they had visited these gentlemen in the middle of the night, that they might be sure of Dufresne; the forgery had only been discovered the evening before, and the police had not yet been put on the traces of the perpetrators.

"After what I have heard, you will have to accompany us also, monsieur," said the policeman to Edouard; "if you are innocent, it will be very easy to justify yourself."

"Ah, I will confess everything," said Edouard, allowing himself to be seized by the gendarmes.

"Oh, well, you're nothing but a stupid head, on my word," said Lampin. "As for me, I'll confess nothing. Come, my friends; you'll be compelled to carry me if you wish me to go with you."

The gendarmes bound Dufresne, who still endeavored to resist them. Edouard, on the contrary, allowed himself to be arrested without uttering a word. Lampin they were obliged to carry, for he was too much intoxicated to be able to stand on his legs. In this manner were they led to prison, where these gentlemen finished the remainder of the night.

They were taken next day before a criminal magistrate. Edouard was confused and stammered; a novice in crime he had not the courage or effrontery to deny his guilt. In vain Lampin, who had returned to his sober senses, represented to him the importance of the answers he should make, and taught him his lesson; Murville promised Lampin to be firm, and to follow his advice, but when before the magistrate the unhappy man lost his courage and answered at random the questions that were put to him.

Edouard and Lampin were incarcerated in La Force, where they were to be tried on the charge of forgery. Dufresne was not with them; accused of having poisoned Madame Dolban, he was to be tried before his two friends, and was taken to the Conciergerie.

Edouard, who had not taken the precaution to bring any money with him, was confined with Lampin in a foul room in the midst of a rabble of wretches, all arrested for thefts, burglaries and deeds of kindred nature. He was obliged to sleep on a little straw and to eat the prison fare accorded to those awaiting their trial. Lampin bore his imprisonment gayly; he sang and shouted, and played the devil with the unfortunate creatures by whom he was surrounded. Edouard did not possess the courage necessary for a course of crime; in the depths of his soul he experienced remorse and regret. During the long night he wept on the stone which made his bed, and his tears were a subject of derision and low joking for the wretches who were shut up with him.

During the day the prisoners had permission to walk in a large yard; Edouard did not accompany his companions, preferring a few moments of solitude and freedom to indulge in his lamentations. He saw no one from the outside world; he no longer possessed any friends; and the comrades of his pleasures did not come to visit him in his prison. However, the other prisoners, who were no better and no worthier than he, daily received visits, and were not abandoned by their worthy associates. But Edouard had the reputation among these gentlemen of being weak and pusillanimous, and men of that character are not fitted for anything; the least reverse prostrates

and discourages them; and cowards are as greatly despised among criminals as among honest men.

The memory of Adeline and her child came then to the mind of Edouard; it is when we are unhappy that we remember those who really love us. He had repulsed his wife and his child, and abandoned them without knowing if the poor creatures could procure the means of subsistence; but he was fully assured that Adeline would hasten to lavish consolations upon him and to mingle her tears with his, if she knew he was in prison. Despite all the evil he had wrought upon her, he knew her at least well enough not to doubt her heart.

One day Lampin drew near Murville with a cheerful air which seemed to announce good news.

"Are we to get our pardon?" demanded the latter hastily.

"Our pardon! Why, yes; we mustn't expect that. Besides, stupid, you injured our case so much today that anyone would need to be blind not to condemn us. Ah, if you had only been a different man; if you had faithfully said what I taught you, we should have confused them all in such a manner that they wouldn't have been able to make anything out; but you chattered like a magpie."

"Do you forget that it was your fault that I was arrested? It was you who gave the alarm to the police."

"Ah, my boy, that's different: I was as drunk as a lord; I had taken enough for three, and when wine's in — as the proverb says, 'In vino veritas.' But now one doesn't trouble himself about that; our old friend Dufresne is more fortunate than we are."

"Have they given him his liberty?"

"No, but he has taken it. To speak more plainly, he has escaped from prison with two other friends. Deuce take it, my boy, there's not another man like Dufresne; he's a sterling good fellow. He's not flabby like you; I'll bet he would have set fire to the prison rather than stay in it. A man like that never lacks friends. Dufresne had found some acquaintances; he got away from the police, and he did well, for they would have condemned him to death."

"To death! Why, what has he done?"

"What has he done? Well, now, that's good — that is. Have you just come out of a mouse-hole? You don't know why he was nabbed?"

"Why, I thought it was because of that note."

"Oh, no; it was for more than that. But, in fact, I remember now that fear had the same effect on you as wine; you heard nothing. Learn that Dufresne is accused of having poisoned Madame Dolban, with whom he lived."

"Good God! the monster!"

"It seems the affair looks very black for him; he will be condemned to death by default, but

you can very well understand that he won't return to his old haunts to get himself nabbed. We shall see him no more. I'm sorry, for he's a clever fellow. It's a pity he went too far."

"And we?"

"Oh, they'll transfer us to the Conciergerie to try us; and there, my man, firmness and rhetoric are necessary; if you cry there as you did here, it's all up. We shall be at sea in the service of the government."

"Unfortunate that I am! Oh, if I only could have —"

"Hush! somebody is listening to us. Enough of talk."

While the unhappy Edouard was a prey to all the agonies of terror and of remorse, and while, surrounded by vile scoundrels who gloried in their crimes and in their depravity, he saw himself the object of their contempt, without one among them addressing a word of pity to him or deigning to share his troubles, — the days rolled quietly by for Adeline at Guillot's farm, as she watched her daughter's growth, who had just begun to babble a few words that only a mother could understand. Jacques, always zealous and courageous, undertook all the most laborious work, and did more than any two men on the farm, and the occupation was pleasurable to him. He returned at night to sit near Adeline and take his little niece on his knees and dance her to the air of a military song.

Everybody liked Frere Jacques, for so everyone in the village had called him since they knew that he was the brother-in-law of Madame Murville; and the farmer and his wife were proud to have under their rustic roof a woman like Adeline and so brave a man as Jacques.

But this peaceable life was not to last. One of Sans-Souci's trips to Paris was to bring about great changes. Jacques' brave comrade started one day for the great city, charged as usual with secret commissions by Adeline and her brother-in-law, who both, without speaking on the subject to each other, had the same thought, and were desperately anxious to know what Edouard was doing.

Up to that time Sans-Souci had not been able to procure any information; but an unlucky chance brought him in contact with a friend whom he had not seen for a long time. This friend, after following several occupations, was now messenger of the Conciergerie, and was employed by those awaiting their trial who still had permission to communicate with the outside world. Sans-Souci uttered the name of Edouard Murville, and his friend informed him that Edouard was in prison, and that he was to be sentenced on the following day.

"In prison!" exclaimed Sans-Souci; "my brave comrade's brother! Thousand cartridges! that I should learn such news as that! How that will grieve poor Jacques!"

The messenger, who saw that Sans-Souci was greatly interested in Edouard, was displeased with himself for having said so much.

"But come now; why is he in prison?" asked Sans-Souci with anxiety. "What has he done? Speak; tell me. Is it for debt?"

"Yes, yes. Oh, I believe it was for a note," replied the messenger hesitatingly, carefully guarding himself from disclosing the whole truth, and trying, but in vain, to turn the conversation.

"Hang it! his brother, her husband, in prison! Poor little woman! Poor comrade!"

"Say nothing to them about it, old chap; don't speak to them of it. I'm vexed at myself for having told you such sad news."

"You're right. I'll hold my tongue; I'll say nothing, for assuredly they couldn't mend that. This Edouard is a worthless fellow — all the worse for him."

"Oh, yes; he's a very worthless fellow; they'd do well to forget him."

"Oh, of course, we outsiders may think that; but a wife, a brother — One has a heart, look you; and when it's troubled about someone that it loves, it always pushes one to the front. Good-by, old fellow! I'm going back to the farm, very sorry because of meeting you; however, that's not your fault. I've a full heart, and the worst is, I'm too stupid to dissimulate."

Sans-Souci left his friend and returned to the

farm. Adeline and Jacques questioned him according to their usage; and Sans-Souci answered that he had learned no more than he had on previous occasions. But it was useless for him to pretend; his sadness betrayed him; his embarrassment, when she spoke to him of Edouard, awoke Adeline's suspicions. A woman easily divines the feelings which we experience in secret. Edouard's wife, convinced that Sans-Souci was hiding something from her concerning her husband, unceasingly followed poor Sans-Souci about; she pressed him, she supplicated him, to tell her everything.

For two days the brave soldier's courage held out against Adeline's entreaties. But he reflected on Edouard's position, whom he believed to be imprisoned for debt, and he thought that Murville's wife possessed acquaintances in Paris by whose assistance she could, without doubt, soften the rigors of her husband's situation. Edouard had been culpable, but perhaps misfortune would have steadied him. He must not be deprived of all help and consolation. These reflections decided Sans-Souci to hide from Adeline no longer that which he knew. An occasion soon presented itself. The next day the young woman begged him to tell her what he knew about her husband. Sans-Souci consented, on the condition that she said nothing of it to Jacques, fearing the latter would scold him. Adeline promised him, and he then told her all he had learned in Paris.

As soon as Adeline knew that her husband was in prison, she made her arrangements; she left Sans-Souci and went to her room, gathered together some jewels, the last remnants of her lost fortune, made a little parcel of her wearing apparel, and, after having written on a paper that no one should be made uneasy by her absence, she took her little Ermance in her arms and secretly left the farm, resolved at all costs to obtain her husband's liberty or to share his captivity.

It was not quite nine o'clock in the morning; Jacques was in the fields, the farm people were occupied in different directions, and Adeline was on the way to Paris long before she was missed.

Adeline did not know yet what means to employ to obtain access to her husband; she had formed no plans, being ignorant of the formalities necessary to obtain an interview with a prisoner. One thought alone occupied her: her Edouard was unfortunate, he languished in a prison, he was deprived of all consolation; for Adeline knew the world, and was well aware that those who had surrounded Edouard in his prosperity had abandoned him in his distress. Who would now dry the tears of the poor prisoner, if not his wife and child? However, he had repulsed their affection, and in past days had shunned their caresses; but when one we love is crushed by the weight of his misfortunes, a generous heart remembers nothing of its wrongs.

Sans-Souci had spoken of the Conciergerie; towards the Conciergerie, then, she must direct her steps. Adeline believed that her prayers, her tears, and the sight of her child, would soften the jailers, and she did not doubt that they would permit her to see her husband. This hope doubled her courage. She got as far as Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, carrying in her arms little Ermance, who was not yet a year and a half old, and there found one of those cheap cabs which convey Parisians to the suburbs and to country festivals. For a moderate price the cabman agreed to carry the young woman and her baby, and turned his horses' heads towards Paris.

There was but one traveller in the cab with Adeline,—an old man of seventy or thereabouts, with a pleasant countenance and a frank and benevolent manner that inspired confidence and respect. His dress betokened that his circumstances were easy but unostentatious; and his manners, without being those of the great world, denoted that he was accustomed to the usages of good society.

Adeline bowed to her travelling companion and silently seated herself near him. The old gentleman looked at her with an attention which soon deepened into interest. There was in Adeline's aspect something so lofty and so touching that it was impossible to see her without being impressed in her favor and desiring to know her further.

Little Ermance sat on her mother's knees, and her infantile beauty charmed the old gentleman, who gave her some bonbons and caressed her. Adeline thanked him for his kindness, smiled at her baby, and again relapsed into thought. The traveller tried to enter into conversation with the young lady; but, though her answers were courteous, she seemed so deeply preoccupied that her companion was afraid of appearing intrusive. He ceased to talk, but his eyes noted Adeline's sadness, he heard her sighs, he remarked that her beautiful eyes were turned anxiously toward Paris, and that they were often filled with tears. He dared not seek to distract her from her sorrow; he pitied her in silence.

The road seemed wearisomely long to Adeline; the wretched horses went at their usual pace; nothing could have made them gallop. Sometimes Adeline was tempted to yield to her impatience and descend from the cab, in the hope of reaching her destination sooner on foot. But she must necessarily carry Ermance, and her strength was not equal to her courage. She remained in the cab and reflected that each turn of the wheel brought her nearer to her husband.

The old gentleman looked at his watch, and this time it was Adeline who broke the silence.

"Will you kindly tell me what time it is, monsieur?"

"Nearly one o'clock, madame."

"We are still at some distance from Paris?"

"Oh, no; a short three miles or thereabouts. In three-quarters of an hour we shall be there."

"In three-quarters of an hour! Ah, the time seems so long!"

"Important business calls you to Paris, madame?"

"Yes, monsieur. Oh, yes; I shall be very late in getting there."

"You have acquaintances in the city, madame? If not, I shall be delighted to serve you in any way."

Adeline did not answer; she did not hear what her companion was saying; she was again plunged in thoughts of her husband.

The old gentleman who had so kindly offered his services, far from being offended, experienced nothing but pity for this young woman, who appeared to be engrossed in such deep sorrow.

At length they reached Paris. The cab stopped and Adeline hurriedly alighted; she took her baby in her arms, paid the cabman, bowed to her companion, and disappeared from his sight before the old gentleman had had time to put his foot on a little footstool which a shoeblack put down to aid him in alighting from the carriage.

"Poor young woman!" said the old man, looking down the way by which Adeline had departed. "How she ran! and how agitated she seemed! Ah, I hope she will not hear bad news."

Adeline went as quickly as was possible for her, burdened as she was with her child. She inquired the way to the Conciergerie; someone pointed it out to her, and she walked on without stopping. Love, anxiety, augmented her strength; she approached her destination at last; she perceived a square; it was the Place du Palais de Justice.

The Place was filled with people; the crowd was so considerable that one could hardly walk.

"It is imperative that I should pass through there," said Adeline, sadly. "Come, since there is no other road I can take, I must make a last effort and try to open a passage for us."

But why were all these people gathered there? Is it a fair, a rejoicing? — some quack who has placed there his travelling shop? Are they singers, or conjurers, or jugglers, who by their songs, or music, or wonderful tricks, draw this curious crowd? No, it is nothing of that kind; our gazers would not shove quite so much if they had only come to see something amusing. They are there to witness an execution; some unhappy criminals are to be branded, and exposed on the fatal scaffold; and to witness this spectacle of human affliction have come hither children, old men and women, and young girls, pressing eagerly towards the spot. Does this astonish you? Do you not know that La Grève is crowded, that the windows looking on the Place are let when some criminal is about to submit to capital punishment?

And whom does one see repairing with the greatest avidity to these painful spectacles? Women, — young women, whose features express sweetness and sensibility. What takes place in the depths of the human heart, if it is possible to find in the timid and gentle sex such an excess of stoicism?

Let us do justice to those who fly from such disgusting sights, and who are deprived of consciousness by the spectacle of an execution. Adeline was among these last; ignorant of what was transpiring on the Place, she paid no attention to the exclamations of the rabble which surrounded her.

"Here they are!" cried several people. "Ah, just see the faces they will make when the red-hot iron is put on them."

Adeline endeavored to cross the Place, but she could not do it; the crowd pushed her and drew her in an opposite direction, and she found herself against her will drawn towards the soldiers who surrounded the malefactors. She raised her eyes to look for a passage, and perceived the unhappy people marked with the stamp of their infamy; she immediately lowered her eyes, desiring only to escape the horrid spectacle. At that moment a mournful cry was uttered by one of the wretches whom they were branding. The cry reached Adeline's ears; it deranged her feelings; she heard it incessantly; she had recognized those

plaintive accents. A feeling which she could not master compelled her to raise her eyes to the culprits. A man still young, but pale, emaciated, disfigured, stood in chains before her. Adeline looked at him; she could not be mistaken. The eyes of the unfortunate man met hers. It was Edouard; it was her husband, an outcast from society, whom she had found again on the scaffold.

An exclamation of horror painfully escaped the young woman's lips. The felon again dropped his head upon his chest, and Adeline, bewildered, distracted, succumbed at length to the violence of her grief, and fell senseless upon the pavement, still pressing, with a convulsive movement, her little Ermance to her heart.

CHAPTER VIII

Goodman Gerval, Jacques and Sans-Souci

Sudden changes of sentiment are peculiar to the French people, and above all to the common people. They easily pass from one condition of mind to another.

After witnessing an execution they will stop before a Punch-and-Judy show, and will be gratified by both spectacles; they are like impressionable children, they laugh and they cry with the most amazing facility; and the same man who will repel his neighbor with the utmost brutality if the latter should happen to stand so as to prevent him from seeing a malefactor conducted to death, will hasten with the greatest alacrity to raise and help a fellow-creature who has been incapacitated by illness, or want, or sudden accident.

The gossiping women and the young girls who crowded the Place du Palais forgot the pretty spectacle that they had come to see, in lending their assistance to the interesting young woman who lay unconscious before them on the pavement.

They carried Adeline and her baby into the nearest restaurant, and there they bestowed all

possible care upon the poor mother. Each one made her own conjectures as to the cause of Adeline's illness.

"It was, perhaps, the crowd, the noise, the heat, which overcame the pretty woman," said some of them; others thought, with more reason, that the swoon of the unknown was too prolonged to have been brought about by such slight causes.

"Perhaps," said they, "this young woman perceived among those miserable men someone whom she had formerly known and loved."

While each one sought to divine the cause of the accident, little Ermance, too young to know the full extent of her misfortune, screamed loudly because her mamma did not speak to her or kiss her.

They succeeded at last in restoring the young woman to consciousness. Poor thing! Was it a service they rendered her? They awaited with curiosity Adeline's first words, but she only cast wild glances about her; then, taking up her little girl, whom she appeared to wish to shield from some danger, she was about to leave the café without uttering a word. This strange conduct astonished those who were helping her.

"Why do you hurry away, madame?" said a good old woman, endeavoring to restrain Adeline. "You must rest for a little while yet, till you are quite yourself again."

"Oh, I must go now — I must rejoin him,"

answered Adeline, looking toward the street. "He is waiting for me; he signed to me to rescue him from that place — to take off his chains. I can hear his voice still. Yes, he's calling me. Wait; don't you hear? He is moaning! Oh, that heart-rending cry! Unhappy man! Ah, how cruelly they treat him!"

Adeline fell weakly upon a bench; her eyes were distended with horror at an image which appeared ever present to her thought. Those who surrounded her shed tears; they perceived that she had lost her reason, and all pitied the unfortunate young woman, and tried to calm her mind. But in vain they hastened to offer her consolation; Adeline did not hear them; she only recognized her daughter, and was obstinately bent on flying with her.

What should they do? How could they learn anything of the family and relatives of the unfortunate girl? Her clothing did not denote wealth. The parcel of wearing apparel, which also contained the jewels she had brought with her, had not been found beside Adeline when they had picked her up; without a doubt some thievish fellow, who was contemplating in advance the place he should one day occupy, had found a way to steal Adeline's effects. She appeared, therefore, to be without resources; and as with most people sympathy is always barren, they were already talking of taking the poor woman to an asylum

and her child to La Pitié, when the arrival of a new personage delayed the execution of this plan.

An old man entered the café and inquired as to the cause of this gathering. Each one told his story. The old gentleman pushed aside the curious persons who surrounded Adeline, and uttered an exclamation of surprise as he recognized her with whom he had travelled from Villeneuve-Saint-Georges to Paris.

"It is indeed she!" he exclaimed; and little Ermance extended her arms smiling, for she recognized in him a person who a few hours previously had given her bonbons.

The old gentleman immediately became an interesting personage in the eyes of the crowd, who were very desirous of learning the history of the poor woman; everyone overwhelmed the old gentleman with questions; the latter, wearied by these intrusive and importunate people, sent someone in search of a cab, and, having ascertained from the master of the café the exact truth as to what had happened to the young stranger, he placed Adeline and her child in a cab, and thus rescued them from the glances of the curious.

Adeline relapsed into gloomy depression; she allowed herself to be led without pronouncing a word, without appearing to notice anything that passed before her; her child even could no longer attract her attention.

M. Gerval—for thus was the old gentleman

named — watched the young woman sympathetically, unable to believe as yet that she whom he had seen in the morning — sad, it is true, but so full of sense — was now deprived of reason, and lost himself in conjectures as to the cause of this singular occurrence.

The cab stopped before a fine private hotel, where M. Gerval always lodged when he visited Paris. They knew him in the house, where everyone had for him the regard which his age and character merited.

He took Adeline and her daughter from the cab and led them to the hostess.

"Here, madame," said he; "I bring you a stranger whom I beg you to lodge until you hear differently from me."

"O mon Dieu! how pretty she is! But what a sad air! what a gloomy expression! Doesn't she speak, M. Gerval?"

"She is suffering; she has experienced some great misfortune; they say, even, that her reason —"

"O Heavens, what a pity!"

"I hope that with the best of care we shall be able to restore her calm, and to you I commend her and her baby."

"Be easy, monsieur; they shall lack nothing. She is another unfortunate creature that you are caring for, I can see, M. Gerval."

"What would you have, my dear hostess? One

must make one's self useful when one can. I have no child and I am old; of what use are all my riches to me if I cannot help the unfortunate? Besides, it affords me pleasure. I am like Florian's good man: 'I often do good to obtain some pleasure.'"

"Ah, Monsieur Gerval, if all wealthy persons thought with you!"

"Can you tell me, madame, if my old Dupré has come in?"

"Yes, monsieur; he's waiting for you in your room."

"I'll go and find him. Pay every attention to that young woman, I beg of you, and see that she wants for nothing."

"You may rely on me, monsieur."

Good M. Gerval went up to his rooms, where he found his old servant Dupré awaiting him with impatience.

"Ah, here you are, monsieur. I've been anxious at not seeing you back. Had you a successful journey? Did you learn anything?"

"No, my friend; the house where the Murvilles formerly lived is now for sale. They said that Edouard Murville had been living there for some time with his wife, but nobody knows where they have gone. How did you get on, Dupré?"

"Me, monsieur? Oh, I know nothing further. Your old friends are dead, and I learned nothing as to the whereabouts of their children. Several per-

sons, however, have spoken to me of one Murville, a business man, a trickster, and altogether a worthless fellow; but nobody could or would tell me what had become of him. It is, perhaps, the younger of the sons, the one who left the paternal dwelling when only fifteen years old. An escapade like that doesn't promise well for the future."

"I shall be sorry if it is as you say. I should have wished — But I see that I have come back too late; my travels have kept me away from Paris for ten years, and only during the past year, since I have retired from business, could I have returned to this city. But what changes ten years have wrought! My friends (it is true they were already old when I left Paris) — my friends are dead or gone away. All this saddens me, Dupré; this city offers me nothing but memories; we will leave it and return to live in my little house in the Vosges; there I wish to end my days. But enough of that; I have something to tell you, for my journey hasn't been altogether useless. It has made me acquainted with a very interesting young woman who appears to be most unfortunate."

"You don't say so? And where did you meet her, monsieur?"

"We were in the same cab coming to Paris; for, notwithstanding your advice, I travelled in one of those wretched vehicles."

"O monsieur! and you allowed yourself to be jolted like that! It wasn't right of you."

"Well, well; I rode easily enough, and I felicitate myself on not having followed your advice, since I travelled with a young woman whom by chance I met again under the most distressing circumstances."

M. Gerval recounted to his servant what had happened, and the chance which had caused him to meet the stranger again in a café at the moment when they were talking of sending her to an asylum. Dupré, whose heart was as good as that of his master, was impatient to see the young woman and her pretty little girl; he followed his master, who led him to the room which they had given Adeline.

Edouard's wife was walking about her room in a highly excited state, while little Ermance was sleeping quietly in an armchair. As M. Gerval and Dupré entered the room Adeline started with fear and ran to her child, appearing to imagine that they wished to take her away.

"Don't be frightened, madame," said the old man, approaching her softly; "it is a friend who comes to console you. Tell me your troubles; I can mitigate them, I hope."

"What a crowd surrounds me!" said Adeline, casting dark glances about her. "So many people! Why are they assembled here? Ah, I do not — not — wish — no, I do not wish to stop in this place. They have come to look at some unhappy people. Let me fly! But I cannot; these

unkind people hold me. Ah, let me shut my eyes tight; we'll not look.— He is right there — right near me!"

She dropped upon a chair and put her hands before her face.

"Poor woman!" remarked Dupré; "it must be that she has received some frightful shock. Do you know, monsieur, that the unfortunate woman appears to be of gentle birth? she has a look of great refinement. Her clothes are very simple, — almost those of a peasant; in spite of them, though, I venture to bet that this woman is not a peasant."

"Oh, undoubtedly not," responded M. Gerval, "I can see that as well as you can. But how can we learn who she is? If this dear baby could only talk plainer!"

"The little one is awake now, monsieur," said Dupré, "why not give her some bonbons and try to distinguish the names she will pronounce. We may learn something."

Gerval approached Ermance and kissed her. The little one recognized him, and held out her arms to go to him. He gave her some bonbons; he danced her, and she murmured the name of Jacques; for it was Jacques who every evening had danced her on his knees and played with her.

"Anyone would say that she knew you, monsieur," said Dupré to his master; "I believe it was Jacques she called. Wait, listen."

"Poor little one! It may be, perhaps, that her father is also called thus. Try to find out if it is really that name she pronounces. Her mother knows him without doubt."

The old man approached Adeline, pronouncing in a loud voice the name of Jacques. The young woman immediately raised her eyes, and herself repeated the name.

"Good! she understands us," said Dupré in a low voice.

"You are looking for Jacques?" said Adeline to M. Gerval. "Ah, please do not tell him this frightful secret, that he may always be ignorant of his shame. Poor Jacques! He would die of grief. Ah, promise me that you won't say anything to him."

The good Gerval promised her, and Dupré sadly rubbed his head.

"There's an end of it, monsieur," said he to his master; "there's nothing to hope for. But what's your plan?"

"We will make all the research possible. You, Dupré, shall go to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges and get information about all the Jacques you can find in the village; and then you will try to learn something. If we can discover nothing there, I shall have to see how—"

"Ah, I'm very sure, my dear master, that you won't abandon this young woman and the child."

"No, Dupré, no; I shan't abandon them. But

it's getting very late, and I am tired. I'll go to bed, and tomorrow we'll begin our researches."

Having commended Adeline to the care of the people of the house, M. Gerval retired to rest.

Adeline remained during the night much as she had been during the day,—now greatly excited, and pouring a stream of incoherent words; now plunged in most profound depression, appearing to perceive nothing of what was passing before her. They noticed, however, that even the sound of a voice raised a little higher than usual, the least cry above all, agitated her and threw her into the most violent delirium.

The next day a doctor, called by M. Gerval, came to see the poor young thing; but all the means employed by his skill were inefficient to restore her calm. He thought that a residence in a quiet spot would render less frequent the violent paroxysms of her malady; but, ignorant of the shock which had deprived her of her reason, he gave little hope of her restoration.

Dupré went to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, and there made inquiries about all the Jacques in the country. Two peasants only bore that name, but they did not know anything in regard to the young woman and her child. Dupré could learn nothing, and returned to his master.

The latter had not been more successful in the researches he had made in Paris; the journals did not advertise that a young woman and her daughter

had disappeared from their dwelling, and he could obtain no information as to the name or family of those whom he had sheltered.

Ten days rolled by and Adeline remained in the same state; her disorder was less frequently augmented by violent crises; but when, by chance, a cry reached her ears, her delirium became violent, and her state was frightful. The voice of her baby alone did her no harm; that voice always penetrated right to the heart of the poor mother, who had not yet forgotten the accents of her child.

"My dear Dupré," said M. Gerval to his servant, at the end of these ten days, "I see very well that we must give up all hope of knowing who this interesting young woman is. Upon my word, my good fellow, I have made up my mind as to my course; I have resolved to take these poor things with me. As you know, I am going to retire to my house in the Vosges. That solitary dwelling, surrounded by trees and groves, is what will best suit our invalid. That's according to the doctor's advice, and we must follow it. There, at least, nothing can trouble the quiet that this unhappy lady needs. We shall take care that she does not hear any cry. We will educate her daughter; Catherine, who is very fond of children, will watch over this poor little one, and the caresses of the innocent creature will repay me for that which I shall do for the mother. Well, come now, Dupré; what do you think of my plan?"

"I'm delighted with it, monsieur; it's just like you,—always humane and benevolent. You give everything to the unfortunate."

"It's a pleasure to me; I have no family; the unfortunate are my children. You know I came to Paris in the hope of having news of a certain little fellow whom I loved in his infancy, and who had, besides, a right to my protection. But, on my word, since I can't find him, this little girl shall replace him. From this moment I adopt her; I shall take care of her mother, and I thank Providence that he has chosen me their protector."

The next day the good Gerval put his plan into execution; he bought a large and comfortable travelling-carriage, and had it fitted with everything that could be necessary on the journey for the young woman and her baby; then, having left his address with his hostess, that she might write in the event of her hearing anything regarding the unknown, the protector of Adeline and Ermance started with them and his old domestic for the country dwelling, where he hoped to end his days in peace.

While the good Gerval's carriage carried Adeline and her daughter toward the north of France, what thought Jacques of the disappearance of the two beings whom he loved? In order to know this we must go back to the farm.

On his return from the field, astonished at not seeing Adeline and her daughter come to meet

him, — for they were always the first to reward his labors with a kiss, — Jacques looked all around for his sister. Uneasy because she was not in the common room, he asked Louise if she was indisposed.

"Indeed, I hope not," said the farmer's wife; "but I haven't seen her all day. You know that sometimes she likes to be alone in her room, and I dare not disturb her. However, it's time for her to be with us now."

"I'll go and look for her," said Jacques, and he hurried up to Adeline's room. The farm people also began to fear that Madame Murville was ill; Sans-Souci said nothing, but he was even more anxious than the others, for he remembered that which he had told Adeline in the morning, and he feared that she might have done something inconsiderate. Each one waited impatiently Jacques' return; he came down at length, but sorrow, distress, grief, were depicted on his face; his eyes were moist, his brow gloomy.

"What has happened?" cried the villagers.

"She's gone! She has left us!" said Jacques, taking long strides about the room, raising his eyes to the ceiling, closing his fists, and stopping from time to time to stamp his feet violently.

"She's gone!" sadly repeated all the farmer's family.

"Oh, but that can't be possible," said Guillot.

"Take this — read it," and Jacques threw the

paper which Adeline had left before the farmer. Guillot took the paper and regarded it fixedly during several minutes.

"Well, now," demanded Sans-Souci, approaching the farmer, "what does she say?"

"Why, I don't know how to read," answered Guillot, still considering the paper. Sans-Souci snatched it from his hands and read the contents aloud.

"You can see very well that she didn't wish us to be anxious about her absence," said Louise; "she'll come back soon, I am certain."

"Oh, I can answer for that, also," said Guillot; "for she wouldn't have left us without saying good-by. Perhaps it's for the best."

Sans-Souci was of the same opinion as the farmer and his wife, and he tried to calm his agitated friend.

"But still," answered Jacques, "where has she gone? Why this sudden departure? Yesterday she did not appear to dream of it; and for so delicate, so feeble a young woman to travel with a child that she is obliged to carry! She will make herself ill. She must have had some news from Paris. Thousand bayonets! If I could find someone who could solve this mystery for me!"

While saying these words, Jacques' glance fell upon Sans-Souci; the latter hung his head, bit his tongue, rolled his mustache, and did not know how to hide his embarrassment.

"Come, Frere Jacques, wait before giving way to despair," said the farmer's wife, inviting the brave laborer to rest himself; "tomorrow perhaps she'll be back."

"Yes," said Guillot, "and we'll eat some famous pumpkin soup in honor of the occasion, and we'll drink some of last year's table wine, which is now getting quite passable."

Sans-Souci did not dare to say anything. He feared that he should betray himself. The looks of his comrade deprived him of speech.

"I'll wait some days," said Jacques; "but if she doesn't come back, then I shall go to seek her, if it be to the end of the world."

They separated sadly. Several days passed and Adeline did not come back. Pleasure and tranquillity had fled from the farm. Jacques neglected his work, Guillot his planting; the farmer's wife neglected the cares of her household, Sans-Souci neglected the farmer's wife, and everybody was unhappy. There were no more songs, nor evening meetings, nor joyous meals, nor jolly stories, nor tales of battle. Sans-Souci began to lose hope of seeing Adeline return; he repented bitterly having spoken to her of her husband, and he followed Jacques about, but did not dare confess to him that he was the cause of Adeline's departure.

At the end of a week Jacques announced that he should go in search of his sister. Sans-Souci then decided to speak; he took his comrade aside,

and commenced by tearing out a handful of hair and sighing profoundly.

"What is the meaning of these jeremiades?" demanded Jacques. "Speak, and be done with your foolishness."

"Hold, comrade. I'm confoundedly stupid; I've a mouth like Guillot's gun. However, I did it all for the best."

"What do you wish to say to me?"

"That it's I who am the cause of your sister leaving the farm."

"You, wretched man?"

"If you do not forgive me I will put a charge of lead into my head."

"Come, speak at once, I entreat you."

"I learned that your brother was in prison. I did not dare to tell you, nor did I wish to tell his wife; but she begged me so hard, and you know well that women can get anything from me that they wish — above all, when I respect them; and then, I thought that she could console her husband a little."

"And I? Do you think that I have a heart of iron? My brother is unhappy; that is the end of it; I forget the manner in which he received me; I ought also to console him."

"Poor Jacques! I was sure of it."

"And you idiotically kept silent, and left me devoured by anxiety. That poor woman! She is with him, perhaps."

"Why, to be sure; there is no doubt of that."

"Is he in prison at Paris?"

"Yes; he is — wait — at the Conciergerie."

"He has run through everything, sold everything, and his creditors have arrested him, I suppose."

"Exactly. Somebody told me something about a note."

"Ah, my brother, if I were rich, how happy I should be to help you! But fate will not allow me to do that. No matter; I ought at least to prove to you that you still have a friend. Sans-Souci, I shall go to Paris."

"And I also; I shall follow you. Hang it! I will not leave you."

"So be it. But don't say anything about my brother's imprisonment to the farm people. These good folk would be capable of wishing to embarrass themselves to be useful to us; and we could not allow that, for they have already done enough for us."

"Yes, you're always right. I approve of what you say. Let us say good-by to them and — forward!"

Jacques and Sans-Souci said farewell to the farmer and his wife, and told them that they were going in search of Adeline; and they started for Paris, where they arrived in the afternoon.

"You know the way," said Jacques to his comrade; "lead me to the prison. I shall ask to

speak to the commandant, to the captain, to the governor — in fact, I shall speak to them all, if it is necessary; this honorable decoration shall serve me as a passport."

"Listen; I don't know any more about the prison than you do, but I'm going to take you to my old friend, who is messenger to the prisoners; he'll tell us what course it is necessary to take in order to see your brother."

"Well, come on; let us speak to your friend. Can we find him?"

"Yes," said Sans-Souci; "I see him now — over there."

They doubled their pace and drew near the messenger, who recognized his friend and took him by the hand, asking him what had brought him to Paris.

"Wait," said Sans-Souci; "come and chat on this stone bench. I present to you my comrade, a brave man."

"He has some wounds and a ribbon; that says enough. Can I do anything for you, gentlemen?"

"Yes; we come on a very important affair; we wish to see a prisoner. You know whom I mean, — that Edouard Murville of whom you spoke the last time I saw you. Well, you see, my comrade is his brother."

"You are his brother?" said the messenger, looking sympathetically at Jacques. "I am sorry for you."

"It is not necessary to be sorry for me," said Jacques, "but for him who is so unfortunate. He has not, I hope, done anything dishonorable."

"What did you come here to do?" said the messenger, without answering Jacques' question.

"Oh, hang it! we came here to see my brother. His wife and baby have already come to console him."

"I can certify that no woman has been to see him, nor has one even applied to see him."

"How could that be?"

"Any attempt to see him now is useless — for — he is no longer at the Conciergerie."

"He is not any longer here? Well, where is he, then?"

"Well, I don't know, to tell you the truth."

"How! Triple cannonade! I can't ascertain where my brother is?"

"Come, my poor Jacques, don't worry," said Sans-Souci; "my comrade is ill-informed. We'll try to learn something further."

"I repeat, gentlemen, that Edouard Murville is not in this prison, and that he should by this time have left Paris. Good-by, brave Jacques! Believe me;— return to your village; don't seek to know anything further, and forget a brother — unworthy of you."

The messenger, deeply moved, pressed Jacques' hand and left the two friends, after having pronounced these words.

Jacques remained motionless and pensive; his brow was cloudy and his expression more severe. Sans-Souci also kept silence; he began to fear that it was not only for debt that his comrade's brother had been arrested. The two soldiers dared not express their thoughts, and night surprised them still seated on the stone bench and buried in their reflections.

"What are we going to do?" at last said Sans-Souci. "We're here like two lost sentinels. It's necessary for us to decide on something."

"We'll seek Adeline and her baby," replied Jacques mournfully, "and forget Edouard. I begin to tremble for that unfortunate man. Let us seek Adeline. Ah, she will never shame me."

"Oh, for her I would put myself under fire."

"Poor woman! Poor little Ermance! Where are they now? Perhaps the grief of knowing that her husband — Ah, Sans-Souci, why did you tell her that?"

"I wish that I hadn't spoken of it. I wish my tongue had served you for a cartridge first."

"There's no rest for me until I know what has become of them. We'll go through Paris, inquiring at every house, if it is necessary; and if we do not find them in this city, we will visit the whole of France, — the burgs, hamlets, villages."

"Yes, by Jupiter, we'll go to the devil, if necessary. But we shall find them, comrade; we shall find them, I tell you."

Jacques and his companion put up at a poor inn. From the break of day they were on foot; they went over all parts of the city, and sought information about Adeline and her baby; but nobody could give them any information in regard to the young woman for whom they were searching. One sees unfortunate people so often that one pays little attention to them. However, from time to time someone indicated to them the dwelling of some poor mother, but when they visited it they did not find the object of their search. On the eleventh day after their arrival at Paris, Jacques and Sans-Souci were walking on the boulevards, still thinking of Adeline, and racking their heads to divine what had become of her.

All of a sudden the foot passengers turned towards the carriageway and seemed to be waiting for something curious.

"Who is it that's about to pass?" asked Sans-Souci of a workman who had stopped near him.

"It's a chain of galley slaves," returned his neighbor, "who are leaving Bicetre, and who are going to the hulks at Toulon. Wait; here's the wagon coming now; we shall see them."

"It's not worth the trouble of so much pushing to see such rascals," said Sans-Souci.

"They ask for charity on their way."

"If they had any heart they'd ask to be shot. Come, Jacques; don't wait there; those folks are not worth pitying."

"I wish to remain," said Jacques, with emotion; "I wish to see them."

The wagon advanced slowly, and Jacques, impelled by a secret presentiment, taking some sous from his pocket, approached it as nearly as possible. Soon the convicts were before him; they extended their criminal hands, imploring the pity of passers-by. Jacques watched them closely and remarked that one of them did not imitate his companions in infamy, but sought, on the contrary, to withdraw from the notice of the crowd; but the wretch to whom he was attached was one of those who exhibited the most effrontery. He pulled the former violently, and this movement permitted Jacques to see the features of the unhappy man. He recognized his brother. A cold sweat broke out on his forehead, and his hand, by a movement more rapid than thought, detached from his buttonhole his decoration, which he immediately hid in his bosom. The wagon had passed, but Jacques followed it with his eyes. Sans-Souci seized him by the arm.

"Come along; what the devil pleasure do you find in looking at those scoundrels? But what's the matter with you? Your face is distorted."

"Oh, Sans-Souci, I am lost — dishonored!"

"You? Nay, that's not possible. Come to your senses."

"My brother!"

"Well, what of him?"

This movement permitted Jacques to see the features of the unhappy man. He recognized his brother.

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Jacques dared not pronounce the fatal word, but he pointed with his hand to the chain of convicts which they could still see in the distance.

"'Tis not he, my dear friend. You are mistaken."

"Ah, would to Heaven I were! But no; there is no mistake about it;—and the good messenger's words,—his look penetrated me while he was speaking, and he pressed my hand. Ah, there is no longer any doubt. I divine all now."

"And even if your brother should be a wretch, is it your fault, after all? Have you fought less valiantly for your country because of it? And your brow, your breast,—have they lost their scars? Thousands of citadels! Who is there that could blush to know you? I would stick ten thumb's-lengths of my old blade into him."

"Ah, my friend, my name is tarnished. O my father! if you had known!"

"Your father's dead, but if he were living your glory would console him for your brother's dishonor."

"No, Sans-Souci; there is no consolation for such a misfortune. Ah, if I had no other duty to perform, I would rejoin these wretches and find a way of approaching him whom I can never more call my brother, to blow out his brains and do the same to myself after."

"A very agreeable plan, but you'll not execute it. You must remember that you have a sister—

for that good Adeline loves you as a brother; you must remember little Ermance, whom you danced on your knees. You must not deprive those unfortunates of the last friend who remains to them; you must forget your sorrows in solacing theirs, and with them you will feel that you have not lost all; for we shall find them, my comrade; we'll rummage every corner of the earth to find them. Who knows that they're not at the farm now — or in some poor hut where they've need of our help? And you wish to desert this world when these unfortunates have only you to look to? No, sacrebleu! that can never be. You will yield, you will wait. Come, Jacques; take courage in sorrow, as well as under fire, and forward."

Jacques allowed himself to be led by his comrade; the latter profited by this circumstance to make him leave a city where they had lost all hope of discovering Adeline, and they took the road to the farm, flattering themselves that they should yet find the young fugitive; but this last hope was soon destroyed; the sadness of the villagers told them enough. Jacques wished to start again immediately, to go again in search of Adeline and her baby, and it was not without trouble that they made him consent to rest for one night at the farm. They perceived that Frere Jacques was sadder, more gloomy, since he had visited Paris; but the peasants attributed this melancholy to his lack of success in his search for Adeline.

Sans-Souci made all preparations for a journey which he thought, with much reason, would be of long duration; and Louise, though very much grieved by her cousin's departure, felt that he should not abandon his friends. The farmer's wife thrust a well-filled purse into each of the travellers' bags; it was nothing more than the price of their work during the time that they had lived in the country; but she dared not offer it to them, and she felt that the means she employed was the best, since it did not give them an opportunity to refuse it. Kind people never lack wit and tact when they wish to oblige anyone.

At the break of day Jacques was up and about, nor was Sans-Souci late in joining him. He took his bag on his back, a big stick in his hand, and said to his comrade, —

"When you are ready, forward!"

The two friends prepared to leave. The farm people came weeping to bid them adieu. The children, who had long been accustomed to play with Jacques' mustaches and to roll on the grass with Sans-Souci, clung to the travellers' legs and would not leave them; Louise held a corner of her apron to her eyes, and her sighs said much more than her words; Guillot was no less grieved than the others.

"Here am I left all alone with my wife," said he; "I shall be tired of my life. Wait, Frere — comrade Jacques; let me give you a little present

for your journey, that may be useful. One never knows where he will find himself."

So saying, Guillot handed Jacques a pair of little pocket pistols.

"I bought them the last time I went to the village, of an old soldier. I was going to give them to you on your birthday; but, since you are going, take them with you now."

Jacques thanked Guillot and accepted his present; then, kissing everyone, he left with Sans-Souci, vowing not to return to the farm without Adeline, and to permit himself no rest until he had found her.

CHAPTER IX

The Galley Slaves. The Wood-cutter and the Robbers. Dufresne's Story

Frere Jacques had not been mistaken in believing that he had recognized his brother among the convicts. The unhappy Edouard was suffering the punishment of the crime into which he had allowed himself to be led. His sentence condemned him to twenty years at hard labor, to be branded, and to be exposed.

Lampin, who was an old offender, and who had formerly been punished for robbery, was condemned to the galleys for life. In vain he advised Edouard to deny everything; but the latter had not sufficient strength of mind to keep a resolution. He contradicted himself, he convicted himself, and easily convinced them of his crime.

The wretched man had recognized his wife and his child as he stood on the scaffold in the Place du Palais, at the moment when the seal of reprobation scarred his flesh. He had seen Adeline fall, apparently dying before him. This heart-rending scene was for a long time present to his thoughts. The image of a wife who loved him, and upon whom he had brought misfortune; the

sight of the child whom he had condemned to shame, and who could not hear the name of her father without trembling; and the remembrance of the happiness which he had tasted in his household, — entirely overcame him, and made him feel more vividly the horror of his situation. Remorse reigned in Edouard's heart, and he endeavored, so far as he was master of himself, to avoid the presence of the other prisoners, who mocked at his sorrow and taunted him with his cowardice. A hundred times the unfortunate man formed a plan of putting an end to his life, but the methods he conceived in fear and trembling his weakness instantly rejected. In this frame of mind Murville made the journey from Bicetre to Toulon, without perceiving, as he passed through the streets of Paris, that his brother had given alms to his companions.

Lampin was always the same; he maintained his reckless gayety in the hulks; shame was for him only a vain word, and he endeavored daily to make Edouard renounce that which he called prejudice.

It is not in the society of convicts that a guilty and repentant man can find salutary counsels. For one criminal who experiences remorse, how many there are who are hardened in crime, and who take a pleasure in utterly corrupting those whom sincere repentance could restore to the paths of virtue!

Little by little the image of Adeline and her daughter faded from Edouard's mind and gave place to the plans which his companions discussed with him every day. He banished his remorse, which they proved to him would be fruitless, to seek for some plan of escape. At the end of six months in prison, disgust for life was replaced in his heart by an ardent desire for liberty.

A bold project was formed. Even in the galleys the prisoners find means of establishing relations with those of their friends who, for the time being, enjoy their liberty; and the latter will risk everything to save their comrades, because they know that sooner or later they will wish to claim the same service.

It was Lampin who had charge of the execution of the plot. Forced to be sober, he retained all his presence of mind. The day, the moment, arrived. A bribed guard left some doors open; the convicts, who had supplied themselves with files, had broken their chains; they gathered together in the middle of the night, cut the throats of three sentinels, and penetrated into a court of which the wall could be easily climbed by men accustomed to scale walls. Lampin climbed first, Edouard followed, holding on to a chain which his companion still had attached to his feet. Several convicts had already liberated themselves from the precincts and had thrown themselves into the ditch which was on the other side; but some shots were heard, the

alarm spread, the garrison was all under arms, the soldiers running, and drawing on the prisoners; many fell dead, and others gave themselves up. The revolt was suppressed, but nobody had yet had time to learn how many had escaped.

Lampin and Edouard had heard the noise of arms. They must get out of the ditch, but where should they go? How should they fly quickly enough? Already soldiers were searching the town and the port. Soon they would doubtless fall into their hands. Edouard was in despair, and Lampin racked his head, swearing that nobody could take him alive. But the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard, and presently an uncovered wagon filled with vegetables, and driven by a young peasant, passed near them. The villager was seated on the front of his wagon asleep, leaving the reins floating on the back of his horse, who followed at his own pace his accustomed road.

"Imitate me," said Lampin, running to the wagon; "we are saved."

Immediately he climbed on the back of the wagon, made a great hole in the middle of the peas, the cabbages and the carrots, and crept into it, followed by Edouard, carefully preserving their means of obtaining air. The peasant turned himself, rubbing his eyes, but saw nothing because he was still half asleep, and was settling himself to repose more comfortably when some soldiers passed by his wagon.

"Have you met anybody, my man?" asked the sergeant of the villager.

"My word, sir; nobody except some donkeys, some wagons and some people from our village."

"Take care; some convicts have escaped; if you should see them, call for help and carefully notice which road they take."

The soldiers departed; the peasant settled himself for sleep, murmuring between his teeth,—

"Yes, I'm likely to amuse myself catching robbers; I'd a good deal rather dream of my big Mannette. Besides, I'm not afraid of them; those gentry don't amuse themselves by stealing cabbages and carrots."

"We are saved," whispered Edouard to his companion.

"Not yet," answered Lampin; "this peasant is taking his vegetables to market, and when he discovers us I don't believe he will take us for two bunches of onions."

"What shall we do then?"

"Oh, hang it! we must take the road to the country. Wait first, though, until that rascal there is snoring, which will not be long, since he is thinking of his big Mannette."

In fact, the peasant was not long in falling into a deep sleep. Lampin then passed his arm underneath the vegetables, seized the horse's bridle and made him turn to the other side of the road. The animal knew but two routes, the one to market

and the one to his stable, and, feeling himself vigorously drawn away from the first, he believed that his master was returning home, and he took, without hesitation, the road to the village.

"At last we are safe," said Edouard, softly drawing his head from beneath the vegetables that covered it, and seeing about him nothing but trees, and fields void of habitation.

"You are always thinking we are safe, idiot," said Lampin; "however, we are not out of danger. We have done nothing except leave Toulon. This peasant will take us to his village, where they will capture us again."

"We must leave this wagon and hide ourselves."

"A fine way!—hide ourselves! And where shall we do that? On the trees, like sparrows? We must first attain some distance. With these chains on our feet we cannot go far."

"We can file them."

"Have we the time for that? Come, a blow on the head—we are on a lonely road. I do not see a solitary house. Come, quick! Get down first."

"And afterwards?"

"Get down, I tell you, and stop the horse softly. While you are doing that, I will begin by searching our conductor."

Edouard got down from the wagon; Lampin held the bridle; the horse stopped.

"We must detach him," remarked Lampin, "in order to save ourselves. We must do it quickly."

While saying this he searched the pockets of the villager and took from them his knife and some pieces of money. Edouard, very awkward, not knowing how to detach the horse, called Lampin to help him. The latter appeared to meditate a new project while examining the costume of the peasant.

"I tremble for fear he should awaken," said Edouard.

"If he awakens he is dead," said Lampin, and he hastened to get down to detach the traces which held the horse to the wagon. The villager, however, was so used to the movement of the vehicle that he awoke some moments after it had stopped.

"Get up! get up there!" he cried to the horse, rubbing his eyes.

"We are lost," said Edouard in a low tone.

Lampin did not answer, but he rushed toward the wagon, and, as the unfortunate peasant was about to rise, plunged his knife into his bosom. The villager uttered only a faint cry. Edouard was seized with horror.

"Unhappy man! what have you done?" said he, tremblingly.

"What was necessary," replied Lampin. "The worst of it is that I cannot take his clothes, because they are covered with blood. I must content myself with his hat and his blouse."

While saying this the scoundrel despoiled his victim of those garments, put on the smockfrock, hurriedly mounted the horse, then turning toward Edouard, who had not yet recovered from the shock, —

"Now, my boy," said he, "get yourself out of here the best way you can."

He immediately pricked his horse with the point of his knife and disappeared, leaving Edouard beside the unfortunate man whom he had murdered.

The night drew to a close; Edouard was still near the wagon, in the greatest consternation at the flight of Lampin, and so greatly troubled by all that had happened to him during the past few hours that he did not know what course to pursue.

The unfortunate peasant still breathed; from time to time he uttered a feeble groan. Edouard did not know whether to help him or to save himself. He hesitated, considered, and the first rays of the sun found him in the same situation; then, casting his eyes upon himself, he realized that his dress would cause him to be recognized as an escaped convict, and trembled lest they should take him for the murderer of the villager. This idea froze his blood; the sight of the wagoner horrified him, and he departed as quickly as his strength would permit him, and gained a little wood, where he hoped to escape the search.

His first care was to file his irons and throw

them far from him; but he could not thus disembarrass himself of his garments, and he felt that he could not venture to show himself without exposing himself to arrest. This thought made him angry; he regretted for a moment that he had not entirely despoiled the unfortunate villager of his clothing.

The day had now come; the peasants were going to their work. Edouard, hidden in the wood, plucked some figs and some olives, and climbed into a tree to await the return of night.

But how long seemed the day, and how he trembled when some villagers came into the wood to rest themselves not far from the tree which sheltered him! He heard them speak of the murder of the poor carter.

"It was a convict who struck the blow," said the peasants; "several escaped last night from the hulks at Toulon, but the gendarmes are on their tracks, and they cannot fail to take them soon."

Edouard was conscious of nothing but the difficulty of saving himself, and he gave himself up to despair. Night arrived at last; he descended from the protecting tree and resumed his way. Every time that the slightest sound came to his ears he stopped, and buried himself in the thickest bushes. His face and his hands were torn and scratched by the branches and the thorns; but he felt no inconvenience; he would have liked to hide himself in the bowels of the earth.

He walked as fast as his strength would permit him, carefully picking some fruit as provision for the following day, stopping only in the most deserted neighborhoods, and hiding during the day at the top of a leafy tree. On the fourth day he passed, towards the close of the night, by a cottage surrounded by a garden; he glanced around in the hope of perceiving some fruit, but what was his joy on perceiving some linen and some garments hanging upon the clothesline. The idea of seizing some of them and of stripping himself of his convict's garments presented itself immediately to his thought; the theft did not now frighten him; he felt that it was justified by his situation. A half-ruined wall four feet high only separated him from the precious garments. For the first time he did not calculate the danger; he leaped the barrier and seized that of which he had need, helping himself without experiencing the least remorse at the theft, for the deed which he now committed seemed to him a very little thing in comparison with all that he had seen done.

In the midst of a dense forest he stripped himself of the garments which would have disclosed his identity and rehabited himself in those which he had stolen. A little more at ease now, believing that he must be already far from Toulon, he resumed his way, deciding to entreat the hospitality of some peasants for the night, hoping that they would give him a morsel of bread, which he looked

upon in the light of a treasure capable of repairing his strength. Not willing, however, to expose himself to the risk of entering a village, where he feared to meet some of the soldiers charged with the pursuit, he dared only to knock at the door of an isolated cottage which was surrounded with thick woods.

A peasant opened to him and asked him what he could do for him.

"Much," said Edouard; "I am an unfortunate man, exhausted with fatigue and want; allow me to pass the night with you; you will save my life."

"Indeed," said the peasant, regarding him attentively, "you appear very tired and very destitute. But who are you, for it is necessary to know whom one receives into his house?"

"I am — I am an unfortunate deserter. — I will confide it to you; do not give me up."

"A deserter! The devil! But that's not very good, — to desert. But I'm incapable of betraying you. Come in; you shall tell me why you have deserted."

Edouard entered, experiencing a sweet joy at finding a place of shelter.

"Ah, come now," said the peasant, "I will give you a share of that which I have, though I don't say it will be very good; but you shouldn't be difficult to please. I am a poor wood-cutter; I'm not rich; I live from day to day, but I am very

pleased to be able to share my supper and my bed with you. I have some bread, some cheese, and a remnant of wine, which we will finish. My bed is not bad; it is the best article of furniture in the house; I bet that you'll manage to sleep well. Come, my friend, tell me your adventures. I have served myself; yes, I was formerly a soldier, but I flatter myself that I did not desert; and I should like to know your motive for acting so badly."

Edouard invented a story which he told to the wood-cutter; the latter listened with attention. Edouard's singular story and the little resemblance which it bore to truth, his embarrassment when his host asked some details in regard to his regiment and his garrison, made the wood-cutter suspicious, and he began to believe that he had been duped by some vagabond. However, as he possessed nothing to tempt cupidity, the peasant shared his supper with Edouard; then he invited him to undress himself and go to bed. Edouard responded cheerfully to this invitation; he had already taken off his jacket and was about to throw aside his vest when a sudden thought struck him, and he paused sheepishly before the wood-cutter.

"Well, what is it? Don't you want to come to bed?" said the peasant, noticing Edouard's terror.

"Pardon me, I am going to bed."

"It seems to me that you were going to undress yourself, and now you're standing there as if you didn't know what to do."

"Ah, yes — yes — I was thinking — I should rest better in my clothes, so as to be ready for an early start tomorrow morning."

"As you please; whatever suits you."

Edouard threw himself on the bed and the wood-cutter did likewise, but with no intention of allowing himself to go to sleep; a secret anxiety disquieted him; he feared that he had given shelter to a scoundrel, and wondered how he could clear his doubts. The wretched man, quite overcome by fatigue, who for a long time had not rested on so soft a bed, yielded immediately to the slumber which overpowered him. The wood-cutter, who had feigned to do likewise, rose softly as soon as he was sure that the stranger was asleep. The peasant left his chamber and went into a little storeroom to strike a light. He lit a lamp, took his gun, and came noiselessly back into the room where Edouard was resting. The unfortunate man's sleep was broken and restless; he struggled, turned violently on his bed, and broken phrases escaped from his lips. The wood-cutter listened, and heard these words distinctly: —

"On the road — in the middle of the night — he was murdered. Take these irons off me, deliver me from these chains, which prevent my flight."

"Murdered!" repeated the peasant between his teeth. "Come, I have entertained some highway robber, and this scoundrel is sleeping on the bed

of an honest man. Who knows that he hasn't agreed to meet the rest of his gang here? Indeed, they say for some time past the neighborhood has been infested with brigands. They wish, perhaps, to take my cottage for one of their dens. The devil! If I had only known! I will commence by freeing myself from this one while he is alone. Let's see, however; I'll first try to verify certain suspicions."

The wood-cutter approached Edouard; he carefully cut the back of the jacket and vest of the unfortunate convict and drew away the part which covered his shoulder, and, shading his lamp with one hand, so as to prevent its rays from falling on the stranger's eyes, he held his breath, thrust his head forward, and saw, trembling, the fatal mark of infamy.

"I was not mistaken," said the wood-cutter, going to place the lamp in his chimney and loading his gun. "This is a scoundrel, but, by all the devils, he'll not stay here long with me; lest I should expose myself to further dangers, I'll drive the rascal from my cottage."

Immediately he turned toward the bed and with the butt of his gun he roughly pushed Edouard; the latter awoke; he sat up, and with terror beheld his host taking aim at him, while he regarded him with looks expressive of anger.

"Leave this house instantly," cried the wood-cutter in a loud voice, still holding his gun directed

toward Edouard. "Leave! and I advise you not to return or I'll break your head."

"What have I done? Why this anger?" said Edouard, looking around him with surprise. "Am I not still in the cottage where someone accorded me hospitality? Was it not you who deigned to share with an unfortunate man your supper and your bed? And now you drive me away. What have I done that I should be treated thus?"

"You know well, wretch! Go, and rejoin your comrades on the highway; go, robber, murderer of travellers, but you need expect nothing more from me."

"Monsieur, you are mistaken; you are in error. No, I swear to you I am not a robber; I am incapable of unworthy designs."

"Is that so? And you are an honest man, perhaps; and that mark you bear,—perhaps they decorated you like that because of your good actions."

"Good God!" said Edouard, carrying his hand to his jacket and perceiving that it had been cut. "What is this? You have dared—"

"I wished to assure myself that you were what you said; your conduct had awakened my suspicions, and I have fully verified them. Come; you see your stories can no longer deceive me. Still once more, will you go? I can't sleep with a man like you."

"Unhappy wretch that I am!" cried Edouard,

leaving the bed and despairingly smiting his forehead. "I have no longer any resources; I am lost, driven away by all the world, obliged to fly from society which repulses me, reduced to live in the shade. This infamous mark throws me back into crime. It is only amongst criminals that I can find a shelter; it is only in committing some new trespass that I can prolong my existence. The way of repentance is closed to me; I must necessarily become a scoundrel."

While saying these words he threw himself on the ground and writhed in despair at the wood-cutter's feet. The latter for a moment was moved on seeing the frenzy of the wretch before him; he brought his gun to earth and would perhaps have yielded to pity, when a double whistle was heard, which was loudly repeated from different parts of the wood.

The suspicions of the wood-cutter and all his anger were immediately rearoused. He had no doubt that the signal which he heard was that of some brigands who were about to rejoin their comrade. He again raised his gun; Edouard still implored his pity, approaching his host and raising his hands toward him; but the wood-cutter, mistaking the designs of the wretch, whom he believed capable of murder, recoiled some steps and pulled the trigger of his gun. The shot sped; but it was ill aimed, and it failed to reach its victim. The leaden bullet whistled over the shoulder of

the unfortunate man, who was still on his knees, and penetrated the wall. Fury and despair called forth Edouard's courage, and he resolved to sell his life dearly; he seized a hatchet, which he perceived in a corner of the chamber, and at a moment when his host turned to strike him with the butt of his gun, he gave the latter a blow on the head, which extended him without life at his feet. The wood-cutter fell without uttering a cry, and his blood spurted on Edouard, who was horrified at seeing himself covered with it.

At the same moment the door of the cottage was forced open; four men, covered with rags and armed to the teeth, and possessing the most hideous faces, appeared at the entrance, and, thrusting their heads into the room, for some moments contemplated the scene with surprise.

"Oh, ho!" at last said the one who appeared to be the chief; "it seems to me that there are some strange adventures in this place, and that we have comrades in the country. Double thunder! here's a jolly fellow who appears to me to be very skilful at his work."

Edouard remained motionless in the middle of the cottage, still holding in his hand the bloody hatchet with which he had struck the wood-cutter. The brigands entered the house, the chief looked attentively at Edouard, then made a movement of surprise and of joy.

"It's he!" he cried at last; "it's surely he!

Come, comrades; you should surely know him too."

"Why, hang it, yes; it's our friend. Come, Murville; kiss your old acquaintances, the faithful companions of your pleasures and reverses."

Edouard, hearing voices that were familiar to him, raised his eyes and perceived Lampin before him; but he did not recognize the other brigand whose accents had struck him. The chief took his hand and shook it heartily; Edouard looked at him, and sought in that horribly mutilated face to find features not unknown to him.

"Well," said Lampin, "you don't recognize our old friend?"

"Dufresne!" cried Edouard. "Can it be?"

"Yes, Murville, it is surely himself," said Dufresne, detaching several bands which distorted a face on which were a number of imitation scars, and taking off a plaster which hid one of his eyes and a part of his forehead, also a beard which covered the chin and the upper lip. "I'm delighted that you couldn't recognize me; that will prove to you my skill in disguising myself, and that's something when one has a sentence of death at his back. But you, my dear fellow,—it seems to me that you have become a little sharper since we saw you last. The devil! but this does you honor."

"Comrades," said Lampin, who was rummaging in the cottage, "there is nothing of any use to us here. That gunshot which we heard is likely

to bring to this place those whom we would rather not meet. Believe me, we had better leave this hovel and go back to the woods. There we can chat easily enough and in more safety than here."

Lampin's advice seemed prudent. The robbers left the cottage, drawing Edouard with them, who could hardly recover from his surprise, and could not persuade himself that he had found Dufresne disguised as a bandit chief. After walking for some time in the thickest of the wood the robbers came to a stop in a glade, where they made a fire, drew forth some provisions which they spread upon the grass, and, after having prepared their arms in case of surprise, they seated themselves about the fire, the flame of which alone lighted their repast.

"I don't know," said Dufresne, looking at Edouard with a ferocious joy, "what presentiment made me hope that we should be one day reunited. In fact, I have always worked for that. Is it not so, Lampin?"

Lampin was eating with great appetite and, according to his custom, drinking with a still better; he contented himself with looking at Edouard and laughing. The latter was considering his new companions, not knowing yet whether he should felicitate himself on their meeting.

"How does it happen that I should find you with Lampin in this wood?" said he at last to Dufresne; "and why have you entered upon such a perilous means of existence?"

"Why, what other kind of life should one embrace when one is, like us, proscribed by society? Oh, don't try to play the innocent,—you who have just killed a poor wood-cutter, whose death brought you nothing."

"I only did it to defend myself. The man had drawn on me, and was still threatening me. I had to parry his blows."

"The deuce! You parried them in a pretty fashion. But no matter; let us return to what we were saying. You must not forget that I have been condemned to death; happily, I did not await my sentence before escaping from prison, thanks to two faithful friends whom I had formerly helped. We can nevermore appear in broad daylight; we have chosen the woods and the highways for the exercise of our industry; it is very necessary to do something. Finally, in stopping a traveller who was passing through the wood on horseback, I recognized Lampin, who asked nothing better than to become one of us. You will be one of us also, my dear Murville; for you can do nothing else, and you should be delighted to have met us."

"Yes, yes," said Lampin; "and I am sure that you bear no grudge against me for leaving you in the middle of the night near the carter. What could I do, my boy? I saw that the horse was no great thing; he could never have galloped with two riders on his back, and I gave myself the preference, as was very natural."

"What a sad existence!" said Edouard, throwing glances around him,—"living in the wood, in the darkness, incessantly expecting to be arrested, exposing one's life for a few pieces of gold."

"Ah, dang it, my little man," said Lampin, "I confess that we were gayer when we could make Veronique the Blonde dance, and drink madeira or champagne; but one has his ups and downs."

"Take courage, my dear Murville," said Dufresne; "we can still be rich and follow our pleasures under another sky. Meanwhile I do not wish longer to confine myself to a life in the woods, there to await some miserable travellers; besides, four or five men are not sufficient to form a band strong enough to be capable of stopping large carriages. But I have vaster plans, and as I possess, when it is necessary, the talent to render myself unrecognizable, I hope, when my comrades have thoroughly learned my lessons, that we can essay some bold stroke, whether as introducing ourselves into rich private gentlemen's houses, or by giving ourselves titles and surroundings, according to circumstances."

"Ah, our comrade is very crafty; his knowledge is diffuse. I should very much like to know where he got his education."

"I can satisfy you, my friends, by giving you the history of my youth. My tale will not be long, and it will amuse you. Besides, Murville can profit by it. There are some things which

concern him, and I need no longer be under any restraint with him."

"Well, tell us your story," said Lampin; "in the mean time, we will drink — all the better, because we have nothing else to do in this cursed wood, where for two nights we have missed the mark. Stir the fire and drink without noise."

The robbers stirred up the flame of the fire, each one supplied himself with a bottle, and they grouped themselves about their chief; while Edouard, his head supported in his hands, waited in deep silence for Dufresne to commence his story.

"I was born in a little village in the neighborhood of Rennes. My father, who was formerly rich and respected, was ruined by the loss of a lawsuit brought against him by one of his cousins. Become poor and having no longer any friends, he was obliged to accept a place as gamekeeper with an old nobleman who loved his game better than he did his vassals, and would not forgive the death of a rabbit or a partridge when killed on his lands.

"My father, imbittered by his misfortune, cherished in the depth of his heart a desire to revenge himself upon the one who had deprived him of his means. He lived in a little cabin situated in the midst of the wood; he brought me there and kept me near him. I was six years old when my father retired to this solitude, and I was bold, enterprising and courageous, willing, and already

possessed a strong will. The nearly savage life which I led for some years did not tend to soften my character. I ran about incessantly in the forest, I climbed the mountains and steep rocks. I leaped over torrents and precipices; and when I returned to my father, he repeated to me the history of his misfortunes, teaching me to curse the men whose injustice had revolted his heart, and recommending me to despise everybody, and not to count on the equity or the recognition of my fellow-beings; and, to prove what he said to me, he enumerated the services which he had rendered when rich to people who had all repaid him with ingratitude, and told me about the unjust lawsuit which he lost only by fraud and bad faith, finally making me swear vengeance on those who had ruined him.

"My father's words were graven on my memory. Perhaps other counsels would have made me protect and defend those whom I swore to despise and hate; but the first impressions are the ones which form a young mind, and my independent tastes led me already to break without consideration every obstacle that was opposed to my will.

"An adventure which I witnessed augmented still further the aversion I had for my fellow-men. I was then thirteen years of age; I was going to take a reading lesson with my father, for he had said to me that knowledge was necessary to my interests, and that reason alone had decided me to learn all I could. I was walking in the wood, when

I heard two shots fired close at hand. I ran to the spot whence came the sound, and I saw two young men, whom they were arresting because they were hunting in the nobleman's wood.

"One was a well-dressed, well-mannered young man of distinguished bearing; the other was a poor peasant covered with rags and apparently in the last stages of poverty. The first had killed a hare, the second a rabbit; however, the town-bred man laughed and sang in the midst of his guards, while the poor peasant, pale and trembling, hardly had strength to support himself.

"Curious to learn how the affair would result, I followed everyone to the château; the nobleman was then absent, but his steward acted in his place; he had full power to represent his master. They therefore led their two prisoners before monsieur the steward. I mingled with the crowd and by this means slipped into a large room where they first led the poachers. The steward arrived; on perceiving the young city man, he saw that this was a different matter from dealing with peasants, who habitually trembled before him. He sent everyone away, that he might question the fine gentleman privately. But in place of leaving like the others, I hid myself under a table covered with a cloth and heard very plainly the following conversation: —

"'It distresses me, monsieur, that I am obliged to act with so much rigor,' said the steward in a

palliatory tone; 'but my master is very severe and his orders are absolute.'

"'Oh, that indeed! Old fox, you're joking, I think, with your orders,' replied the young man mockingly to the steward. 'You must know that I am a cadet of a good family, and that if you do not instantly restore me to liberty I will cut off your ears the first chance I have.'

"'Monsieur, you take a very strange tone, and I cannot suffer —'

"'Wait, old usurer; I see very well what's necessary. You're the steward; that speaks for itself. Take this purse; it contains fifty louis; that will pay for all the hares on your master's estate.'

"Thus saying the young man drew from his pocket a purse which the steward found no difficulty in accepting. Then opening a little private door, —

"'Go down by this way into the garden,' said he in a low voice to his prisoner; 'you turn to the right and you can leave by another door which opens on the fields. I have compromised myself for you, but your manners are so engaging.'

"The young hunter did not wait to hear further; he was already in the garden. The steward carefully closed the little door, then rang for a servant, and ordered him to tell them to send the poacher before him.

"They brought the villager, and the steward remained alone with him.

"'Why do you hunt?' said he to the peasant brusquely, in a harsh voice which bore no resemblance to that with which he had addressed the other prisoner.

"'My good monsieur,' said the wretched man, throwing himself upon his knees, 'forgive me; it is the first time, and I swear to you it shall be the last.'

"'These rascals never say anything else.'

"'I'm not a rascal, monsieur, but a poor devil who has a wife and five children, and does not know how to find food for them.'

"'Well, why do you have children?'

"'Oh, monsieur, they bring us the only pleasure we can have without money.'

"'And why should churls like you have pleasures? Work, you low beast, work; it is your lot.'

"'I've no work, monsieur; and I earn so little — so little; it barely suffices us with care.'

"'Because you eat like sharks.'

"'I never eat my fill, in order that my little ones may have theirs.'

"'Your little ones! your little ones! These knaves impoverish the country with their little ones.'

"'Mercy, monsieur steward, your master has raised about fifty dogs, and it seems to me that I've a right to raise four or five children.'

"'Do you see this impudent wretch, who dares compare his disgusting progeny to monseigneur's

greyhounds? Come, if it's a question of rights, you've been taken poaching; the evidence against you is clear; the theft is manifest. You shall have a hiding, a fine, and imprisonment.'

"'Ah, have pity, monsieur; it was only a rabbit.'

"'A rabbit, knave! The deuce! a rabbit,—you don't know what that is. Monseigneur protects his rabbits; I must revenge the one you have killed.'

"'Hang it! if it had been for monseigneur's table—'

"'Then it would be very different; it would be only too happy to enter its master's mouth; but you are a poacher.'

"'Monsieur steward, have pity on my wife and children; we are so poor; there is not a sou in our house.'

"'You deserve to be hung. Go! go to the lockup, and tomorrow a flogging.'

"The steward rang, the servants came running, and led away the peasant, despite his prayers and his tears.

"I had remained underneath the table, where I was suffocating with anger. When everybody had gone I jumped out of the window, and ran to tell my father everything I had witnessed. My story did not astonish him. It was to him only one more proof of the injustice and barbarity of men. As for me, I had my plan. I knew the nobleman

would return the following day, and I would bring the thievish steward to punishment. Therefore I started at daybreak for the château. On arriving there I saw in the court the unhappy peasant, whom some servants were unmercifully beating with a stick; while from his high balcony the nobleman watched the scene while giving biscuit to his great dane, and some sugar to his greyhounds.

"'I will revenge you, goodman,' I said while passing near the villager. Immediately I mounted the staircase as fast as possible and penetrated to monseigneur's room before the servants had had time to announce me. The steward was with his master, occupied in counting his gold for him. I ran, and threw myself at his lordship's feet; but in my haste I stepped on a paw of one of his favorites; he yelped, and his master glanced angrily at me, while asking why they had allowed me to reach his presence. Before they had time to answer him I related my history, and told, almost without taking breath, all I had heard take place the evening before between the handsome hunter and the steward.

"The old nobleman seemed somewhat surprised to learn that they had arrested another poacher; but the steward, who trembled with anger while I was speaking, hastened to say to his master that the young man was a marquis, and that he had not believed that he ought to detain him.

"'A marquis!' said the nobleman, taking a pinch of snuff; 'a marquis! The devil! In fact —yes—I understand; we could not have a marquis beaten; it is necessary, then, that the peasant should pay for two.'

"'That's what I thought, monseigneur.'

"'You acted rightly; send away this little boy who has been so awkward as to tread on Castor's paw.'

"The steward did not wait for this order to be repeated. He took me by the arm and I walked without resistance, not understanding why monseigneur should not have been angry with his thievish servant. On the way, monsieur steward cuffed me soundly, and also bestowed several kicks upon my person. This was the only recompense which I received at the château.

"I returned furious, cogitating a thousand plans of vengeance. My father, who for the first time perceived to what an extent I was capable of carrying my animosity, vainly tried to calm me. The next day a message from the steward informed my father that he was no longer in monseigneur's employ. This was the result of my action the evening before; he suspected it, but did not reproach me. We quitted our cottage without knowing where we should go. As for me, my father's new reverse confirmed me in a plan which I had conceived, and I did not delay its execution. That night, while my father was sleeping at the foot of

a tree, I started with a dark lantern and a gun which he always carried with him, and ran towards the nobleman's dwelling. Arrived there, I picked up a great number of fagots and laid a fire at the four corners of the château, taking care, for fear that the fire should not take quick enough, to throw some lighted branches on all the battlements and, above all, beside the stable. I soon had the pleasure of seeing my vengeance succeed. The fire took in many places and communicated itself rapidly to all the wings of the château. They sounded the alarm; the villagers came running, and several of them had the goodness to throw themselves into the midst of the blaze to save a seigneur who found satisfaction in having them beaten. In the midst of the tumult and disorder I gained the apartments, and saw the steward, who was trying to save himself with a little casket which he pressed to his breast. I placed myself before him and, taking aim, —

"'Wait,' I said to him; 'this is to teach you to kick and cuff me.'

"I fired my gun and he fell dead before me. I threw away my gun and seized the casket, and, jumping from a window with my usual agility, I fled from the château, which was soon only a heap of ruins.

"I hastened to return to the place where I had left my father. I was proud of my vengeance and delighted at possessing a casket which I supposed

to be full of gold. I had already noticed that with gold one can procure everything and draw one's self from every peril.

"But what was my surprise at finding my father gone, when I had believed him still to be sleeping at the foot of the tree. I ran in vain all about the neighborhood, loudly calling him. It was necessary for me to reach another village without knowing what had become of him. Uneasy about my treasure, I buried it at the foot of an old oak, after taking from it some pieces of gold, of which, in fact, the casket was full. I went to bed in a little inn, already rightly thinking that no one would suspect a child of committing the incendiary act which had reduced the château to ashes. In fact, nobody paid any attention to me. Everyone was talking of the disaster, and each one made his own conjectures. During the day a villager came, saying that the guilty person had been arrested.

"'It is,' said he, 'one of monseigneur's former gamekeepers; he had been discharged, and wished to revenge himself on the steward, whom he believed to be the cause of his disgrace. He laid the fire that he might more easily get at his enemy, for they found the latter killed by a shot from a gun which they recognized as one belonging to the gamekeeper.'

"On hearing this I did not doubt that my father had been arrested in my place; I was frightened for him, and, resolving to give myself up to save

him, I at once left the inn and took the road to the village where they should have led him. I did not stop for a moment on the way, feeling that every instant was precious, and, arriving at length on the big square of the village, I perceived my father hanging from a gibbet. I did not give myself up to sorrow,—for that is a feeling which I never experienced,—but to fury, to rage. I should have liked, had I been able, to set fire to the village and burn all the inhabitants. That night I stole my father's body; I had the strength to carry it into the forest, where I dug a grave; and I swore over his inanimate remains to revenge myself on all men for his death and his misfortunes, and never to have any good-will for those who had unjustly ruined and put to death an innocent man.

"I recovered my precious casket and I left the country. Thanks to the treasure I possessed, I was able to follow all my tastes and to procure every pleasure. I lived thus during five years, giving myself up to all the passions which age had developed within me; I loved wine, play and women, and as long as I had gold I denied myself nothing; but my treasure could not last long at the pace which I followed, and at eighteen years of age I had reached the bottom of my casket; but, instead of grieving at this event, I was rejoiced, thinking that the moment had come when I should hold to the vow made on my father's grave.

"I employed myself with nothing except making some dupes, and I did not find that a difficult task; in the society to which I had obtained an entrance, thanks to my treasure, I had learned its habits and good manners; I had the greatest facility in disguising my features and changing my voice when that was necessary; add to that some wit, a good deal of audacity, firmness and eloquence, and you may judge what success I attained. Under the name of Breville I had known at Brussels a certain Jacques Murville who had run away from his parents. That was your brother, my poor Edouard, and I had the adroitness to relieve him of all he possessed. In Paris, taking another name, I went to your wedding; the name of Murville struck me; I made inquiries; I learned that you had a brother, and it gave me pleasure to appropriate to myself the fortune of the heir after having spent the money of the cadet. But another idea filled my heart when I saw your wife; Adeline's beauty, her grace, charmed me. I fell violently in love with her, and I swore to dare everything to possess her. It was first necessary that I should introduce myself into your house; I came there; I knew how to widen the division in your household, and to softly draw you toward your ruin, which was the aim of all my vows. I discovered your liking for play, and then it was not difficult for me to make you commit all the follies imaginable. I wished, however, to enrich myself at your

expense, but the cursed play was never favorable to me. I impelled you towards crime because your wife had disdained me, because I wished to revenge myself upon you for all her scorn. You were nothing more than a machine, responsive to my will.

"After having tried all means to vanquish Adeline's resistance, I had recourse to a stratagem. I introduced myself one night into her apartments and I shared her bed. You shudder, O my poor Edouard! Your wife did not deceive you; you have a dragon of virtue. On perceiving her error she evinced for me nothing but hatred, but I had, none the less, the certitude of having destroyed her happiness forever.

"You know me now; learn by your experience to judge men. As for me, who have known nothing but falsity, cupidity, injustice, self-interest, ambition, jealousy, and who have always sacrificed prejudice to my passions, I should see myself with indifference a robber chief, if in this kind of life I could satisfy all my desires; but whatever may be the position in which I find myself, whatever may be the profession which I embrace, I shall hold to the vow made on my father's tomb. I shall hate men, and I should have nothing to do with you yourselves, if you, as well as myself, were not born for the misfortune of humanity."

Dufresne thus ended his story, and the robbers seemed proud to have as their commander so great

a scoundrel. Edouard, terrified by all that he had heard, trembled at the remembrance of all that he had done at the advice of a monster who had sworn his ruin and who tranquilly informed him of his dishonor. But it was too late to look back, above all to one so feeble and irresolute as was Edouard. He felt that he ought to loathe Dufresne, but he had not the strength to leave him. Vice degrades and brutalizes a man. Edouard, while experiencing all the horror of the situation, had not enough energy to seek to leave it.

Day commenced to whiten the summit of the surrounding mountains and to pierce the glades of the forest. The robbers extinguished the fire and packed the remainder of their provisions in their wallet.

"Comrades," said Dufresne, "it is necessary to leave this country. We can do ourselves no good here. We must start at once; but in the first town of any size that we shall pass, it is necessary that the boldest among us go to buy some garments which will give us the look of honest men; for, believe me, that must be our character above all others. In order to be successful we must throw dust in people's eyes, and with our jackets and pantaloons all in rags we can never stir from these woods, and must remain all our lives miserable vagabonds."

Dufresne was listened to as an oracle by those who surrounded him. Everybody made ready to

follow his counsels, and they took the road, avoiding the frequented ways with care during the daytime. Dufresne guided his little band; Lampin walked singing and drinking; the two other bandits, dreaming of the robberies which they could commit; and Edouard, not yet knowing whether he should leave his companions or remain with them.

CHAPTER X

The House in the Vosges

A grand chain of mountains thickly wooded, and in summer time covered with umbrageous foliage, divides Alsace and Franche-Comté from Lorraine, and extends nearly to Ardennes. In these mountains, called the Vosges, the property of good M. Gerval was located, and it was here he conducted the unfortunate mother and child.

M. Gerval's house was simple and commodious; a pretty court closed by a strong iron paling led to the groundfloor, which had only two windows and these opened at the back; but these windows, were barred, and furnished with very heavy outside shutters,—a necessary precaution in an isolated dwelling situated in the woods. The first story of the dwelling looked partly on the court and partly on a large, well-cultivated garden, enclosed by a very high stone wall which was behind the house.

This habitation, situated on the declivity of a hillock, was not far from a little road which led to the commune of Montigny; and its picturesque position, its distance from other dwellings, the continual calm which reigned in its neigh-

borhood, seemed to design this simple retreat for a refuge of repose and peace.

M. Gerval's household was composed of Dupré, with whom we are already acquainted; of Catherine, who performed the functions of cook, an old woman who was a little talkative, a little curious, but for the rest faithful, obliging, good, and strongly attached to her benevolent master; and, lastly, of a young peasant named Lucas, who acted as gardener, bootblack and messenger of the house.

In the neighborhood, for many leagues round, the name of Gerval was revered and pronounced tenderly by the unfortunate, to whom the good man was constantly affording succor. He had not always lived in his house in the wood; his business affairs had often kept him away for long periods; but then Dupré and Catherine, who knew their master's heart, had continued to bestow his benefits, so that the needy might not miss the presence of their protector.

The villagers, who had known that M. Gerval had gone to Paris, had feared that he would not come back to them. Catherine herself had shared this fear, for she knew that her master desired to see his ancient friends again, which he had not been able to do for a long time, strongly as he was attached to them. But a letter from M. Gerval brought joy to the inhabitants of the Vosges; they would see again their friend, their supporter, their

father; he was coming back among them, no more to leave them. The news very quickly spread in the neighborhood; everybody ran to Catherine to know if it were true, and the latter reread each time her master's letter announcing the day when he should arrive.

The day was come and everything was upside down in the house, getting ready to celebrate the return of the good man. Lucas despoiled the garden of flowers to decorate the dining-room; Catherine prepared a repast in which she excelled herself; the villagers of the neighborhood and all the unfortunate people who had been helped by the good Gerval ran to the villa.

"He's not come yet," said the old servant, "but he can't be much later."

They scattered themselves over the route; they mounted the heights, that they might the sooner see the carriage. They perceived it at last and immediately surrounded it; the name of the old man passed from mouth to mouth, and the blessings of the poor celebrated the return of the rich benefactor.

Gerval shed sympathetic tears at witnessing the joy of the people of the neighborhood, who looked upon him as a father.

"Ah, my good fellow," said he to Dupré, "how sweet it is to have the power of doing good!"

The carriage entered the courtyard of the house, the peasants shouting gleefully.

"Hush! hush, my friends!" said the old man, alighting from his carriage; "moderate the transports of your joy; they flatter me, but they work harm to an unfortunate creature for whom the slightest cry is disastrous."

While saying this M. Gerval helped Adeline from the carriage, and Dupré carried little Ermance in his arms. Adeline cast anxious glances around her; noise always caused her to appear terrified; the sight of so many people gathered together augmented her delirium; she groaned, and wished to fly. M. Gerval was obliged to make a sign to the villagers to withdraw themselves a little before he could induce the young woman to go into the house. Everyone regarded Adeline with interest, and joy gave place to sadness when they perceived her state.

"Poor woman!" repeated they on all sides; "what could have deprived her of reason? And that little girl, — how pretty she is! These are some more unfortunates that M. Gerval is protecting."

"My friends," said Catherine, "as soon as I know the mystery of the young stranger I will tell it to you, I promise you; and I shall know it soon, for my master hides nothing from me."

Unfortunately for Catherine, her master knew no more than she in this respect. To satisfy the curiosity of his old servant, M. Gerval informed her of the manner in which he had become ac-

quainted with Adeline, and the deplorable state in which he had found her later. The servant uttered exclamations of surprise during her master's recital, but she was assured that she would come little by little to a full knowledge of all the misfortunes of this young woman. For the present, as she had already felt moved to love and cherish the child, she ran to prepare one of the prettiest rooms in the house for them.

Adeline was lodged in a room on the ground-floor, looking on the wood; the window of the apartment was furnished with strong iron bars, so they need have no fear lest in one of her accesses of delirium she might leave the house. They left her baby with her, for she seemed always to know her daughter, and often tenderly pressed her to her breast.

"These are the only instants of happiness which she still appears to taste," said M. Gerval; "we must be careful not to deprive her of them, and not to rob the baby of her mother's caresses."

Catherine assumed with pleasure the task of watching over the young invalid and her daughter. It was she who led the young woman about the neighborhood when the weather was fine; and Lucas, by his master's orders, every morning decorated Adeline's room with fresh flowers. By an abundance of care and attention, M. Gerval hoped to restore the balance of the unfortunate woman's mind. They knew little Ermance's name, because

in her raving her mother called her many times; but they were ignorant of Adeline's, and M. Gerval decided that they should call her Constance. This sweet name had the approval of Catherine, who asserted that love had caused the illness of the unknown. Adeline was thus called by the inhabitants of the house in the woods, but sometimes Lucas and the villagers of the neighborhood called her simply "the madwoman."

Peace reigned in the house in the Vosges. The tranquil life which they all led, and the touching care which everyone had for Adeline, seemed to render her a little more restful. She kissed her daughter and often pressed her in her arms; she smiled on her benefactor and all who surrounded her, but broken words only left her lips, and almost at the same moment she would fall again into the gloomy melancholy from which nothing could distract her.

She passed a part of every day in the garden, which was large and well kept. Sometimes she picked some flowers and appeared to experience a feeling of gayety; but soon the smile would disappear and her features become pale, and she would go and seat herself on a grassy bank and remain there for hours, entirely motionless.

"What a misfortune!" said the good Gerval, watching her and playing with little Ermance, who already returned his kisses. "I believe there is no hope that she will ever be cured."

"And why should you think that, monsieur?" said Catherine. "You must not despair at anything. Patience, patience; a salutary crisis may perhaps come. Oh, if we only knew the cause of this illness!"

"Ah, the deuce! That's what the doctor at Paris said; but it is exactly this cause which we shall never know."

"Nonsense! How do they know? She formerly spoke. — Wait; she seems to smile; she's watching her baby play; she's much better today than usual; I will go and question her."

"Be careful, Catherine, not to disturb her."

"Don't be afraid, monsieur."

Catherine approached some bushes under which Adeline was seated, and Gerval, as also Dupré and Lucas, drew near, that they might hear the answers of the unknown.

"Madame," said Catherine, in the softest of tones, "what are you so incessantly grieving over? You are surrounded by people who love you; tell us your troubles; we will try to console you."

"To console me!" cried Adeline, looking at Catherine with astonishment. "Oh, I am happy — very happy; I have no need of consolation. Edouard adores me; he has sworn it to me. We are united; he makes my happiness — for he is not wicked."

"But why has he left you?"

"Left me! No, he has not left me; he is with

me in this house, where he was brought up in his youth. My mother, my daughter, and his brother are with us. Oh, I do not wish that he should go to Paris; he might there meet — No, no; do not let him go."

"Take care, Catherine," said M. Gerval in a low tone; "her eyes are glowing, and her delirium increases. In pity trouble her no more."

Catherine dared not disobey her master, however much she desired to know more. In fact, Adeline appeared very much agitated; she rose, walked at random, and seemed to wish to fly. The old servant sought to stop her.

"Leave me!" cried Adeline, disengaging herself from Catherine's arms. "He is there — he pursues me! Wait! do you see him? He follows me everywhere — he has sworn to ruin me — he still dares to speak to me of his love! The monster! Ah, in pity do not let him come nearer."

She left them and ran rapidly over all the paths in the garden, and only stopped when, exhausted with fatigue and unable to support her terror, she fell, weak and senseless, to the ground.

They hastened to carry her into her room and to lavish on her the cares which should recall her to consciousness. M. Gerval expressly forbade that anyone should question her again, because to do so always increased her malady.

"It shall be as you say, monsieur," said Catherine; "but you see we are certain now that she

is married, that her husband has a brother, and that there is mixed up with this some worthless fellow who's made love to her and of whom she's afraid. Oh, I divined that easily. I'll wager that same worthless fellow has led her husband to Paris, where he has forgotten his wife and his baby —mercy! that goes without saying. Ah, what a pity that I could not make her speak further! Soon we should have known all."

But as the good woman did not wish to increase further the delirium of the unknown, she dared not ask her any more questions. She often walked with Adeline in the wood which surrounded the dwelling, Ermance being held by Catherine or by her mother. The old servant watched all the movements of the young woman, she noted the words which fell from her lips, she put them together and made her conjectures upon them; but at the end of three months she knew no more than on the second day. Once, however, an accident happened which disturbed Adeline's uniform life. She was walking with her daughter on a hillock at a little distance from the villa; Catherine followed her, admiring the elegant figure, the grace and the carriage of the unfortunate young woman, and saying to herself in a low voice,—

"This woman was not born in a cottage; her manners, her language, show plainly that she was in society; and to think that we shall never know who she is. It's discouraging."

A young shepherd had climbed a tree to rob a nest; his foot slipped, and the branch which he was holding broke at the same time; he fell on the ground, seriously injuring his head, and uttered a mournful cry.

This cry was heard by Adeline, who was quite near the poor man; immediately she stopped, trembling violently; a sudden terror was depicted on her features, and she lowered her eyes toward the ground as though afraid they would see some horrifying object. All of a sudden she took her baby and began to fly toward the wood; in vain Catherine called her and ran after her; Adeline's strength seemed doubled, and Catherine's shouts increased her delirium. She climbed the steepest pathways without taking breath; she skimmed along the grass; she buried herself in the mountains, and the old servant soon lost sight of her. Catherine returned heartbroken to her master, and made known to him what had happened; but M. Gerval knew that all the villagers of the neighborhood were devoted to him, and he sent for Dupré and Lucas and begged them to run all over the township and hasten the good people to make a general search in the woods. Success crowned their efforts. They found Adeline and her baby lying at the foot of a tree; frenzy had yielded to fatigue, and the fugitive could go no farther. They placed her on a litter hastily made of branches of trees, and carried her and her baby back to the house of

her benefactor. The old man dismissed the villagers after he had recompensed their zeal, and also everyone who was not employed in calming the poor invalid, who had been thrown into a frenzy more violent than any she had experienced since her sojourn in the Vosges, by the plaintive cry of the poor shepherd.

Under the influence of a constantly recurring terror, Adeline spoke much more than usual, and Catherine did not leave her, but she shuddered at some of the phrases pronounced by the unknown.

"Rescue him from this scaffold!" repeated Adeline incessantly, at the same time putting her hands before her eyes. "In pity — do not deliver him to the executioner; they will kill him. I heard his voice — But no; that plaintive cry did not come from his mouth; it was another victim. Ah, I cannot deceive myself; I recognized his accents; they still penetrate right to my heart."

Catherine shed tears. M. Gerval saw that there was a frightful secret, and the old servant repeated to her master, —

"A scaffold! some executioners! Ah, monsieur, that makes one shudder."

"No matter," said the good Gerval, "whether the husband or relations of this young woman were criminals; I shall keep her none the less with me. She is not guilty, I am certain; she is only unfortunate."

"Yes, monsieur; but the wretches who have

reduced her to this state, — ah, they are indeed guilty and merit severe punishment."

"Yes, my poor Catherine; but we do not know them; let us leave to Providence the task of avenging this unfortunate creature, and do not let us doubt its justice. It would be very frightful to think that the wicked should enjoy in peace the fruit of a bad action, while their victim spends her life in tears and despair."

M. Gerval assembled his servants again and bade them redouble their care to prevent the grievous crises of the young mother.

"Let there be no noise, no cries, near her room. If you gather together to chat and laugh, — and I don't wish to deprive you of that privilege, — let it be in a room distant from that of Constance, that she may not hear you. Above all, no more questions, Catherine, for they never result well."

"Oh, there's an end of that, monsieur," said the old maid; "I have no wish now to know anything further; it all appears too painful to me, and I should be grieved to cause her ill whom I wish to see reborn to happiness."

Thanks to these precautions, Adeline recovered her tranquillity, and everything returned to its accustomed order. Some time rolled by before they dared to allow the invalid to leave the house; and then it was only when accompanied by Lucas and Catherine that she walked in the neighborhood; and as far away as they could be seen, the villagers,

who knew her state and the orders which M. Gerval had given, withdrew themselves softly from their path. If she came, without being perceived, near a group of young peasants who were amusing themselves, the games, the dancing, the songs, were instantly suspended.

"It is the madwoman," in a low tone said the inhabitants of the village; "don't make any noise; that makes her worse."

Time sped without bringing any change in Adeline's condition, but her little Ermance grew and her mind began to develop.

Her smile already had the sweetness of that of her mother, and she appeared to possess her mother's loving sensibility. A year had rolled by since M. Gerval had rescued Adeline and her daughter. Gentle Ermance loved the old man as she would have loved her father; her little hands caressingly stroked her protector's white hair, and the latter became more warmly attached every day to the lovely babe.

"You have no longer any parents," he said to her, taking her on his knee in the evening; "your mother — poor little one! — is dead to you, as your father is without doubt also, or he has abandoned you and does not deserve your love. I can provide for your future; you shall be rich; then you can be happy, and think sometimes of the old man who adopted you, but who did not live long enough to see you enjoy his gifts."

Winter came, despoiling the trees of their leaves and the grass of its verdure.

The woods were deserted; the birds had departed, to seek under other skies green foliage and murmuring streams. The snow which fell in big flakes on the mountains formed into great drifts in the Vosges, and rendered the roads difficult for foot passengers and impassable for vehicles. The evenings became longer; the sighing of the winds made them sad and dreary. The peasant, obliged to cross the wood, hastened to regain his dwelling, fearing to be surprised by night; he ran, blowing between his fingers, and his steps, imprinted in the snow, often served to guide some lost traveller. However, weariness did not enter into the good Gerval's dwelling, whose inhabitants knew how to usefully employ their time. The old man read or attended to his business and wrote to his farmers, for he had possessions in several parts of France; Dupré kept his accounts, watched over the needs of the house; Catherine managed the household and did the cooking; and Lucas cared for his garden and tried to protect his trees and his flowers from the inclemency of the season. Adeline did not leave her room in the morning except to take some turns in the garden. As soon as night came she retired to her room, sometimes taking her daughter with her; when by chance she remained with the rest of them, she seated herself near Catherine, who told stories to the baby while the good

Gerval played at piquet or draughts with Dupré, and Lucas spelled from a big book some story of robbery or ghosts.

When an extraordinarily violent gust of wind made the panes rattle and caused the branches of the trees which touched the house to rap on the windows, Lucas, who was not brave, and who loved to alarm himself by reading his frightful stories, dropped his big book and cast scared glances about him; the monotonous sound of the weather-cock which turned on the chimneypot, and the uniform noise of an iron hasp which beat against the wall, were special subjects of fear for the gardener. Adeline sometimes broke the silence by crying, —

"Here he is! I hear him!"

Then Lucas jumped from his chair, believing that someone was about to appear, on which Catherine mocked at him, and his master scolded him for his cowardice; and Lucas, to reassure himself, took his book and continued his ghost story.

CHAPTER XI

Truth is Sometimes Improbable

The snow had been falling all day with greater violence than usual. From time to time the hurricane tore branches from the trees, and carried them on to the paths, which by means of them, and of the snow which drifted against them, soon became impracticable.

Eight o'clock struck, and it had already been dark for many hours.

Adeline, rendered more melancholy than usual by the sound of the tempest, had not left her chamber during the day. Catherine had carried Ermance downstairs, and put her to sleep near her mother's bed; the latter was sitting in her chair, not wishing yet to go to sleep, despite the entreaties of the old servant. The master of the house was playing cards as usual with Dupré, and Lucas was taking down his big book, when a ring at the gate was heard.

"Some one is ringing," said M. Gerval; "some belated person, no doubt, by the time."

"It's very singular," said Lucas.

"Shall we open to them?" demanded Dupré.

"It is first necessary that we know who it is.

Perhaps it is some travellers who can go no farther, who have lost themselves in the mountains, or somebody in trouble whom the villagers have directed to me. You know that happens occasionally. I hear Catherine; she is coming to tell us who it is."

Catherine had been to look at the gate, and she came upstairs to take her master's order.

"Monsieur," said she, "here are three travellers; three merchants they seem to be, for they have packs on their backs. They are asking hospitality for tonight. They cannot walk any farther because there are more than two feet of snow on the road; one of them is a poor old man, who appears to be suffering very greatly from the cold. Must we take them in?"

"Certainly, and give them of our best."

"But, monsieur," said Dupré, "three men — and at night; that's rather imprudent — isn't it?"

"How so, Dupré? They are merchants, and one of them is aged. What have we to fear? It is very natural that one should look for shelter in such a storm as this. Should we allow these men to perish in the mountains, for fear of receiving vagabonds? Ah, my good fellow, if it were necessary always to read the hearts of those whom one wishes to oblige, one would very rarely do good. Go and open quickly, Catherine; do not leave these strangers any longer at the gate; you, Dupré, make a big fire, that they may dry them-

selves; and you, Lucas, go and prepare for them the little room which I have reserved for the use of travellers."

Catherine went down and opened the gate for the strangers, who overwhelmed her with thanks. The two younger supported the old man by the arms, and with no little trouble assisted him to climb the staircase to the first floor and into the room where the master of the house was awaiting them.

"You are very welcome, gentlemen," said the good Gerval, as he invited them to draw near the fire. "First seat this old man; he appears extremely tired."

"Oh, yes, monsieur," said the old stranger, in a weak, trembling voice; "the cold seized upon me in such a way that I should have remained on the road, without the help of my sons."

"You will soon be yourself again, my good man. Gentlemen, take off those packs with which you are encumbered. Somebody will carry them into the room which I have placed at your disposal."

The merchants deposited in a corner of the room several packets, which appeared to contain towels, handkerchiefs and muslins. Dupré was still a little suspicious, and approached and examined the packs. One of the young men, who saw what he was at, hastened to open some of them and show his merchandise to the old servant.

"If you find there anything to your taste, monsieur," he said, "choose it; we should be very pleased to make you a present of it."

"Thank you," answered Dupré, who saw that his master was displeased at his inspection of the packets. "We shall see better about that tomorrow morning."

The two merchants returned to the old man and seated themselves before the hearth. Catherine brought a bottle of wine and some glasses, and Lucas took the packs to a room on the second floor.

"Some of this will restore you while awaiting supper," said M. Gerval, pouring some wine for the strangers. "Drink, gentlemen; you will find it good."

"Very willingly," said the young man who had already spoken to Dupré; "there is nothing better than wine. — Wait, Jean. — Your health, monsieur."

"These are your sons?" said M. Gerval to the old man.

"Yes, monsieur; they are my props, — the support of my old age. Here is Gervais, my eldest; he is a very jolly fellow, always rejoicing, always ready to laugh. And here is Jean, my youngest, not so gay as his brother, he speaks little, but he is a steady lad, a great worker, and very economical. I love them both, for they are honest, — incapable of deceiving anybody; and with such

characteristics they should be able to make their way."

"I must compliment you on having such children; but why, at your age, are you travelling with them?"

"Why, monsieur, we are going to establish ourselves in the neighborhood of Metz; my sons are about to marry the daughters of one of their correspondents, and I wish to settle myself near them."

"Ah, that's a different matter; but was it chance which led you to my house, or did the villagers direct you here to pass the night?"

"Monsieur," said Gervais, "we don't know much of this part of the country, and having started a little late we were overtaken by night. That is why we sought a shelter, especially on our father's account, for he is too old to withstand the inclemency of the weather. But for him nothing could have induced us to ask a lodging in a private house, and we should have passed the night on the snow, my brother and I — should we not, Jean?"

"Yes," said Jean in a low voice, without raising his eyes, which were fixed upon the fire.

"You would have been very wrong, masters," said M. Gerval, again helping the strangers to wine. "It gives me much pleasure to be useful to my fellow-creatures, and I will try to make you comfortable for the night."

"You live in a very isolated house," said Gervais, emptying his glass. "Are you not afraid that robbers will break in some time or other?"

"I have never troubled myself about that; nothing has happened to me up to the present."

"Besides, there are enough of us in the house to defend it," said Dupré, as if speaking to himself; "and, thank God, we have arms."

"Dupré, go and see if Catherine has the supper ready."

"Yes, monsieur; I'll also go to see if Madame Constance and her daughter need anything."

Dupré did not go near Adeline, but he was well pleased to have made the strangers aware that there were other people in the house; for he was not very well satisfied at having these unknown persons remain during the night.

He went to the kitchen and asked Catherine what she thought of the strangers.

"My faith! I believe they are good men; the old fellow appears respectable."

"For an old man who can hardly stand without support he has devilishly watchful eyes; and his two sons, — one of them looks to me like a big thief; he chuckles all the time he's talking, and he drinks — oh, a whole glass at a time."

"Is that so? That's very astonishing, — a peddler!"

"And the other, — so grave. He doesn't raise his eyes, and he hasn't yet said more than 'Yes.'

He's quite lugubrious. I don't like those men at all."

"Nonsense! You're too suspicious, my dear Dupré."

"No, but I like to know something about people."

"Did you know that poor woman who has lodged here for more than a year now?"

"Why, that was very different. She's a woman, young, beautiful, interesting; her condition alone would inspire pity; and that baby, so sweet, so pretty. Oh, I know how to read faces; and these merchants — I tell you, Catherine, I shan't sleep very well tonight."

"And I shall sleep very well, I hope."

"Well, be careful, in spite of that, to fasten your door firmly."

"That's all right; that's all right. You're as bad as Lucas. I must acknowledge that we have some very courageous men here to defend us if we were attacked."

"Catherine, you're mistaken; I'm not a coward, but I do feel that I'm no longer twenty years of age. Ah, if I still were I would not be frightened by three men."

"Let me get my supper ready, instead of confusing me with your twaddle."

"Twaddle! Hum! that is easily said. And is not our young woman coming to supper?"

"You know very well that she doesn't usually

do so. She's asleep, I hope, and I don't wish you to wake her."

"Catherine."

"Well, what is it?"

"It seems to me that I hear a noise in the court, against the gate."

"It's the wind rattling the trees and shaking the windows; — besides, you can go and see.'

"Yes, yes; I'll go and make sure myself, since you say that I'm a coward."

Dupré lighted a lantern and inspected the yard. Everything was in its customary condition; the gate was safely closed; he stopped for a moment to look through it, but a puff of snow struck him in the face. While he was rubbing his eyes a low sound came to his ear and seemed to issue from the groundfloor where Adeline was lodged.

"Poor woman! she's not asleep yet," said Dupré; "if I dared I would go and see if she needed anything; but monsieur does not wish that anyone should disturb her in the evening; he has forbidden it. Well, I'll go upstairs and watch these merchants."

The old servant met Lucas on the staircase. The gardener was singing and laughing, for he was always very gay when there were many people in the house.

"Have you got the room ready for the strangers?" asked Dupré.

"Yes, and I've also carried their stuff there.

The big one wanted to give me a piece of money for my trouble, but I refused to take it."

"That was very right of you. For men who travel on foot they are very generous."

"Oh, he seems like a jolly good fellow, — the big one with rather red hair. He laughs and drinks and speaks for everybody. If we should often have lodgers like these, I dare say we should laugh a little more here; but we have nobody but that poor woman, and a madwoman isn't the gayest company, especially that one."

"Hold your tongue; you don't know how to judge of people. I don't say that these merchants are knaves, but — "

"But what?"

"Double-lock your door tonight. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Monsieur Dupré, I understand," replied Lucas, who felt his gayety evaporate, and became pale and anxious; while Dupré slowly went upstairs to his master.

The old man and Gervais were chatting with M. Gerval; the other man answered only in monosyllables the questions which were addressed to him.

"My brother's a little serious," said big Gervais in a low tone to his host; "it's because he's jealous; he's afraid that his sweetheart has forgotten him during the three years he's been absent, and that makes him uneasy."

"I can understand that; but you do not seem to have the same anxiety."

"Me? The women never trouble me; I'm a determined dog; I scoff at everything, and I'm capable of—"

"Hold your tongue, my son," said the old man, interrupting him brusquely; "you speak a little too freely. Excuse him, monsieur; it is because he has been a soldier."

"Ah, you have served in the army?"

"Yes, certainly I have; and when it is necessary to fight I am always there—is it not so, father?"

"Oh, undoubtedly you're an obstinate fellow; anyone can see that."

Catherine announced that supper was ready in another room.

"Let us go to the table," said M. Gerval, leading the newcomers into the dining-room. They seated themselves, the old merchant by the side of his host. Dupré, a very old servant, was treated as a friend by his master, and always ate at his table. He took his customary place, but M. Gerval remarked that there was still a place vacant near him.

"For whom is this place laid?" demanded M. Gerval.

"That's for our young lady, monsieur, or her daughter, if they should come."

"You know well, my good fellow, that they are asleep now. Constance is unused to sitting up so late."

"She's not asleep yet, monsieur; I heard a noise in her room."

The old man glanced quickly at his two companions and then addressed his host.

"You have some ladies with you, monsieur? If we prevent them from joining you, we will at once go up to our room."

"No, don't do that. It's only a young woman and her child. The poor mother, alas! is deprived of her reason. She's an unfortunate creature who has a very loving soul."

"I am sorry for her."

"Drink to her health," said big Gervais, replenishing his glass and that of his neighbor.

"This man doesn't stand on ceremony," said Dupré to himself, as he saw the merchant draw the bottle towards him. "The devil! He would very quickly exhaust our cellar."

The old man looked from time to time at his big son. He appeared displeased at seeing him drink so often, and reproached him for not being more careful.

"Our host's wine is so delicious," answered Gervais; "and you know that I am a good judge of it, father."

"Don't spare it," said M. Gerval; "it will give you strength to continue your journey tomorrow."

"I'll willingly follow your advice, my dear monsieur; I am of the opinion that one can't have too much of a good thing."

Dupré made a grimace. He thought that M. Gervais used very singular expressions; and the more he drank, the less he guarded his manners. The good Gerval excused that, and was amused by the gayety of the merchant, which, however, did not seem to give much pleasure to the old man.

"Why don't you drink, Jean?" said Gervais, pushing his neighbor. "You're a poor stick; and you also, my dear and honored father,—you are making eyes at me which shine like saltspoons. Hang it! I am the only good fellow in the family —is it not so, monsieur? M. Gerval—to your good health—to that of your family, and your madwoman; and to you, old sneak, who look at us as if we came from Arabia Petræa. To everybody's health!—I'm generous."

"Excuse him, monsieur," said the old man to Dupré; "but when he has drunk a little he does not know what he is saying."

Dupré scowled, and answered nothing.

"I don't know what I'm saying!" cried Gervais. "Confound it, you believe that, my dear father? Well, then, you are lying about it, like the snob that you are. Isn't it so, Jean? Isn't he a snob?"

The old man rose, furious. "If it were not for the respect I owe our host," said he, "I should chastise your insolence; but I excuse you because of the state you are in. Follow me; we will not longer prevent monsieur from retiring to rest."

went to bed feeling perfectly safe, and soon forgot in slumber his old servant's words. Dupré's room was on the first floor, next to M. Gerval's; but his door opened immediately on to the staircase which led to the second floor and into the court. Troubled by an uneasiness which he could not quell, Dupré resolved to watch and to endeavor to clear his suspicions. He looked up at the window of the strangers' room; the light was still burning.

"They're not gone to bed," said he. "If I could only hear them. Well, let's try."

He left his room noiselessly, taking no light with him, and went up to the second floor; he stopped before the door, but he recalled then that a little closet in front of the room where they slept would prevent anyone on the landing from hearing their conversation. Dupré was about to go downstairs when he remembered that the top of the chimney of the strangers' room came exactly in front of a dormer-window in the attic. He immediately went up to the attic, taking care to walk silently. He softly opened the dormer-window, and, lying down on the roof upon his stomach, his ear touching the top of the chimney, thanks to the short distance which separated him from the story below, he easily heard the following conversation: —

"You are incorrigible, Lampin; I thought your cursed drunkenness would surely betray us."

"Nonsense! nonsense! What have we to fear, after all? There's nobody in the house except three old blockheads, an idiot, a madwoman and a baby; that's enough to frighten us — isn't it? If you'd only listened to me, when once we had gained an entrance to the house we should have acted openly. For my part, I'll take care of the rich old fellow and his servant."

"We shall act better if we are perfectly sure that we can escape without disorder. You may suppose that before I led you here I made inquiries about the people of the house. The master is very rich and very benevolent to everybody."

"Oh, well, he can be benevolent to us, — the old Crœsus."

"He should have a great deal of money here; I know that he has received remittances from his farmers within the past week. All that will, no doubt, be in his room. We can easily gain admittance to that; we will seize our treasure, and we'll escape by the madwoman's room, because the gate is very strong and very well fastened, and it would cost us a good deal of trouble to force it."

"Ah, that's all very well; but I saw there were iron bars on the window of the groundfloor which looks on the wood. Is it by that that you wish us to leave, very honored father?"

"Don't you suppose I've thought of all that, idiot? I gave orders to our two comrades to file the bars, telling them they might work without

fear, since the one who occupied the room would see them working without saying anything."

"Bravo! That was a luminous idea — was it not, Edouard? Why don't you speak, you cursed dreamer?"

"Yes, yes; it's a very well-considered plan."

"It's very fortunate that it pleases you. Provided that the old steward, who looked so black at us, doesn't upset our plans."

"It'll be unlucky for him if he dares. We must go and let our comrades in; then we shall have the advantage in numbers, and those who are obstinate in their resistance shall be at once reduced to silence."

"That's right; we'll employ an irresistible argument."

"Fortunately, I was moderate at table; if I had imitated Lampin, we should have betrayed ourselves."

"What the devil! you acted the old man so well that I was stifling with laughter; but if I drank, it was only to increase my courage; there is gold to be got here, and drink nerves me up, my colleagues. But now let us see how we are to be distributed at our posts."

"We shall let our friends in in a few minutes; you must let these old people have time to get to sleep. We will leave Edouard as sentinel over the madwoman, to watch that in an access of delirium she does not lock her door and cut off our retreat.

One of our sentinels will be placed near the gardener's room and another near the cook's; and you, Lampin, will accompany me in search for the money."

"That's how you've settled it. Our comrade can't complain that he has a perilous post, — to remain with a sleeping woman and baby. Hang it! what prowess is necessary?"

"Yes, but it is not necessary only to watch her; if she utters the least cry, remember, Edouard, that it will jeopardize our safety, our lives."

"That's sufficient; I understand you."

"And I too," said Dupré, withdrawing his head softly from the chimney. "I know enough, you scoundrels. I was not mistaken; we have taken in some brigands. O my God! inspire me, that I may save my master and this poor woman."

The old servant slipped along the roof and reëntered the attic. Despite his endeavors to rouse his spirits and recall his courage, his knees trembled; he could hardly support himself; and his imagination, upset by all that he had heard, presented to him only pictures of blood and death. Dupré was sixty-five years old. At that age one hesitates as to what one shall do, and in dangerous crises the time lost in pondering the manner of action renders the peril greater.

Dupré groped his way along the attic. How should he waken his master or Lucas? The gardener was not very easily awakened; it would be

necessary to make a noise at his door, and in the silence of the night the least sound would be heard by the robbers and would awaken their suspicions. Catherine was shut into her kitchen and would be in no need of help. But the robbers' comrades were to enter by the young woman's room; it would be necessary to close the entrance to that, after taking Constance and her daughter from the room. This plan seemed wisest to the old servant. He decided to go down, but he trembled; he shuddered in placing his foot on the stairway. If the wretches should come out of their room and meet him he would be lost. He listened before taking each step; at the least sound he paused. He was passing before the door on the second floor, but they spoke; they were coming; they opened the door, and Dupré precipitately ran up the stairs again into the garret.

The pretended merchants had heard the noise above their heads; the heavy step of the old man had caused the boards to creak and disturb the silence of the night. Dufresne came first, carrying a candle in one hand and a dagger in the other; Lampin followed. They entered the attic at the moment when the old servant was hiding himself under a heap of straw.

"We are betrayed," said Dufresne; "somebody has been listening to us; but this wretch will never injure us again."

Immediately he thrust his dagger into the old

man's breast, despite the outstretched hands which implored his clemency. Dupré expired without a cry. His blood deluged the floor, and Lampin covered the unfortunate servant's corpse with an abundance of straw.

"Let's come down now," said Dufresne; "since they're suspicious, we must get to work at once."

"What's happened?" demanded Edouard, who had remained as a sentinel on the staircase.

"Nothing," answered Lampin; "only we have one less spy to fear."

"Come quickly to the madwoman's room; our friends should be at their post. We must not leave them any longer, to freeze to death in the open air."

The robbers went down to the groundfloor; the key was in the door of Adeline's room, and they went in. A lamp placed on the hearth gave light to that half of the chamber of which the window looked on the wood. The child's little bed was placed beside that of her mother, the curtains of the latter being entirely drawn. Very sure that the one who was in the bed would not spy upon their actions, Dufresne at once proceeded to open the shutters of the window, to allow his companions to enter, who held themselves against the window, after having sawn the iron bars.

"Everything's going well," remarked Dufresne; "leave these shutters open, that nothing may oppose our flight. Edouard, remain in this room;

have no mercy on her if she awakens. You, my friends, follow me, and I'll show you your posts. Afterwards Lampin and I will do the rest."

During Dufresne's speech Lampin turned up his cuffs, drew his weapons, and examined the point of his dagger; a ferocious smile played about his features; and his hideous face, which bore the imprint of crime, was animated by wine and the joy of pillage.

The four brigands had departed; Edouard was alone in the room. Attentive to the least sound, he went continually from the window to the bed; he listened lest anybody should pass in the wood, and then returned to his place beside the curtains which hid the young woman. His glance was turned toward the child's bed, but the baby was not there. Adeline, more uneasy than usual, and disturbed by the slight sound which somebody had made behind the shutters, had taken her little daughter to sleep on her bosom, and had thrown herself all dressed on her bed. Curious to see this insane person, Edouard was about to draw the curtain; but a noise coming from the wood attracted his attention, and he turned toward the window. He heard the steps of some travellers, whose feet trampled the dry branches and crushed the frozen crust of the snow; the noise approached; he distinguished voices.

If it should be some soldiers sent in pursuit of them, if they should perceive that the bars of the

window were broken! Edouard shuddered; he softly closed the shutters, that they might not see into the room; he breathed with difficulty. Despite his precautions Adeline was awakened; she suddenly opened her curtains and half rose.

"Is it you?" she cried loudly.

"This unhappy woman will betray us," said Edouard; "her voice will attract the travellers to this side. Come, it is necessary."

Dagger in hand, he ran toward the bed, and was about to strike, when he recognized his wife and his child. A cry of fright, of horror, left the mouth of the wretch, who dropped his murderous weapon and remained motionless before her whom he had been about to strike; but this terrible cry reëchoed in Adeline's memory; she had recognized her husband's voice; the same accents which had deprived her of reason threw her whole being into confusion; she tried to gather her ideas; she felt like one issuing from a painful dream. She saw Edouard, recognized him, and, uttering a joyful cry, threw herself into his arms.

"Edouard, in this place — with me!" exclaimed Adeline, looking at him tenderly. "My dear, how does this happen? Ah, I don't know how to think; my head is burning."

"Come," said Edouard; "come, give me that baby; let us fly — let us fly from this place, or we are lost."

"Why should we fly? What danger threatens

you? Have we not suffered enough? Does the justice of men still pursue you?"

"Yes, yes; and you yourself are exposed to the fury of brigands. Wait; do you hear those cries which come from the interior of the house? That is an old man, whose throat they are cutting without mercy. Come, I tell you, or they will kill you before my eyes. Ah, do not refuse me. I am a monster, a wretch, but I wish to save you."

Adeline allowed herself to be led by her husband; she took her daughter in her arms; she was about to follow him when the shutters were violently pushed open and the bell of the gate was rung.

A man appeared against the window, all ready to jump into the room, while he cried to his companion,—

"Here's a breach; this way, comrade,—this way. Let us get into the place. There are some rascals in the fortress, but we'll drub them. Thousand cartridges! Forward!"

At the sight of the stranger, Edouard, bewildered, distracted, felt sure that they had come to arrest him and his companions. Wishing to evade the punishment which awaited him, he dropped Adeline's hand and repulsed her as she followed him.

"You are saved," he said to her. "Leave me; you will not see me again. Good-by! good-by forever!"

He hurriedly left by the door at the back, gained the court, leaped over the gate and fled into the woods. At the same instant Jacques and Sans-Souci came into the room through the window; while Adeline, exhausted by the shocks she had experienced, fell without consciousness at the moment her husband disappeared from sight.

"Oh, joy! can I believe my eyes?" exclaimed Jacques, running to help the unfortunate woman. "This woman,—it is she, Sans-Souci. Come—come and look!"

"Oh, yes, by Jove, it is she! We have found her at last. Didn't I tell you that one must never despair of anything?"

"And her daughter,—yes, there she is; I recognize her also."

"But when I pushed open the shutters, I am quite certain that I saw a man; he has taken fright.—Oh, what a noise! Do you hear that? Somebody's calling for help. Remain with her; do not leave her again, but give me one of your pistols."

Jacques gave one of his pistols to Sans-Souci; the latter, the pistol in one hand and his stick in the other, directed his steps towards the cries; he went up to the first floor and into a room, the door of which was broken, and beheld an old man on his knees imploring the mercy of a scoundrel, while another wretch who had charge of some bags of money was making ready for flight.

Sans-Souci drew his pistol and fired at Dufresne, who was about to attack M. Gerval, and the reckless scoundrel dropped like a log at the good old man's feet; when he saw that his leader was disabled, Dufresne's comrade threw down the bags filled with plunder, and endeavored to escape, but Sans-Souci did not give him time to do so. He attacked him on the staircase, and struck him over the head so vigorous a blow that Lampin reeled, and rolling down several stairs, struck his head against the wall and expired, uttering the most horrible imprecations.

"You are my saviour!" cried M. Gerval, while Sans-Souci was relieving him of the cord with which he was bound.

"It's true, my dear monsieur, that you've had a devil of a time; but perhaps there are still some robbers in your house, and I must go and complete my inspection."

"I will go with you, monsieur," said the old man; "I will be your guide. Alas! I don't see my faithful Dupré."

At that moment a pistol shot was heard. Sans-Souci ran down four steps at a time, and reached Jacques just as the latter had blown out the brains of one of the brigands, who was attempting to fly by the groundfloor, while his more active comrade had escaped by the same way as Edouard. The sound of firearms, the confusion, the shouts, had awakened Catherine and Lucas; but only when

they heard their master's voice did they dare to leave their rooms. At last they were all together, and they went with lights to Adeline's room. She had recovered her senses, and was looking with new surprise at Jacques, who was beside her.

"My brother, my friend, have I found you also?" said she at last. "I do not know if it is a dream, but so many events have taken place; just this moment Edouard was with me."

"Edouard returned to you? Calm yourself, my dear Adeline, and fear nothing more. The brigands are punished."

Adeline did not answer, but her eyes still sought her husband.

"Victory!" cried Sans-Souci. "For my part I've killed two of them."

"We owe our lives to you, brave strangers," said old Gerval, approaching Jacques. "How can I ever repay you?"

"You have taken care of my sister and my niece," said Jacques to the old man, "and it is I who owe you gratitude, my friend."

"His sister, his niece?" said the good man to his servants.

"First of all, let us go round the house," said Sans-Souci; "there may still be some rascals hidden in some corner."

"And Dupré hasn't appeared. I'm afraid he may have been the victim of his zeal."

"Let us put our people in safety, then forward."

They led M. Gerval, Adeline, her daughter and Catherine into a room of which the door was solid and where they had nothing to fear, and then Jacques and Sans-Souci commenced their round of the house, guided by Lucas, who trembled like a leaf, but dared not refuse to accompany them. Edouard's name pronounced by Adeline furnished an enigma for Jacques, who dared not dwell on the suspicions presented by his imagination. They examined every part of the house without meeting anybody, and in the attic they found the corpse of the murdered Dupré; after assuring themselves that there was not the least sign of life, Sans-Souci, aided by Lucas, carried the body into the lower room, where the remains of the faithful servant should rest until they could perform for him the last offices.

While Sans-Souci and the gardener were acquitting themselves of this sad task, Jacques went to M. Gerval's room; a low groan came from a corner; Dufresne still lived, but he was mortally wounded, and the wretch struggled in vain against death. Jacques put his lantern near the face of the dying man, and a cry of surprise escaped him; Dufresne also recognized Edouard's brother. A vindictive joy for a moment lit the eyes dimmed by approaching death; he gathered his remaining strength, that he might make himself heard.

"I am dying—but if you have killed those who accompanied me—you have given death to your

brother. Tell his wife, tell Adeline, who scorned me — that her husband — after escaping from the gallows — has become by my advice a thief and a murderer."

Dufresne died while pronouncing these words, satisfied at having made mischief in his last moments. Jacques remained for some instants, frozen with horror, near the remains of the one who had brought so much misfortune upon his family; but, overcoming his terror, he determined to verify the horrible suggestion; he went downstairs, paused near Lampin's corpse and tremblingly approached his lantern to the face. It was not Edouard! Jacques breathed a little more freely; he went down to the groundfloor, where the one he had himself shot was lying. Although quite certain it was not his brother, he wished to assure himself again.

"Thanks to Heaven!" he said to himself, after examining the features of the brigand, "my hand is not stained with my brother's blood; he has escaped. May I never see him again! I will forget a scoundrel who has dishonored us, and give myself to the care of the two desolate creatures whom I have found again."

However, before returning to Adeline, Jacques carefully searched the pockets of all the robbers, and especially those of Dufresne, fearing to find on the wretches some paper relating to Edouard.

Having ascertained that there was nothing on

them but money and weapons, he felt more easy, and prepared to join Adeline.

The people of the house experienced the most vivid joy on learning that Adeline had recovered her reason; and while the others made a thorough search throughout the house, M. Gerval told Adeline the manner in which he had come upon her for the second time, how he had lodged her in Paris, and brought her to the country, and all about the time that she had since passed with him.

Adeline threw herself upon her knees before her protector; she was now conscious of all that she owed him, although the good man had spoken in his recital only of the pleasure it had given him to oblige her and had glided lightly over all that he had done for her.

Adeline then inquired as to the late events of the night, and learned that some robbers had introduced themselves into the house, and that, but for the unexpected arrival of two travellers, one of whom it appeared was her brother, they would have been pillaged by the wretches.

She trembled; she recalled to herself how Edouard had presented himself to her sight,—his anxiety, his fright at the appearance of strangers; she dared not prolong her questions, but awaited the return of Jacques with much anxiety. He came at last.

"Some of the robbers have escaped," said he, approaching Adeline, and looking at her expres-

sively. "Those who are dead well deserved their fate."

"Hang it!" exclaimed Sans-Souci, "they all deserved to have been broken on the wheel. I have only one regret, and that is that any of them escaped."

"And my faithful Dupré," asked M. Gerval, —"you've not told me anything about him."

"Alas, my dear monsieur, your old servant was, so it would seem, the first victim of these scoundrels; he is no more."

"The wretches! — to murder an old man like that! Ah, if I had believed his presentiments! Poor Dupré! my imprudence has caused your death. Oh, I shall never cease to reproach myself. This house has become odious to me, and tomorrow I will leave it."

M. Gerval shed tears at the fate of his old servant, and Catherine mingled her tears with his; while everyone sought to comfort the benevolent old man, who reproached himself for the loss of his faithful companion.

Day surprised the inhabitants of the villa in this situation. M. Gerval consented to take a little rest, while Lucas went to inform the authorities of the neighboring commune of the events which had occurred during the night. Catherine made, by her master's orders, preparations for their departure; and Adeline promised the old man that she would presently tell him her misfortunes.

Jacques found a moment to be alone with Adeline; she was longing to question him, but dared not break the silence. He divined her sorrow, her fears, her most secret thoughts.

"Dufresne is dead," he said to her; "the villain has met his deserts at last."

"Dufresne? What! Dufresne was among these brigands? Ominous thought! Ah, there is no doubt, then; he has led him into the last excess of crime. Edouard had—"

"Silence! Let that frightful secret be known to none but ourselves," said Jacques in a low voice. "The wretched man is saved; may he lead an honest life in other climes; it is too late for him to repent, and his presence would be for me and for yourself the height of misfortune. Forget forever a man who did not deserve your love, which you have religiously given him. The tenderness which one keeps for a being so vile, so despicable, is a weakness, a baseness unworthy a noble and generous heart. Preserve yourself for your daughter, for me, for all those who love you, and peaceful days are yet in store for us."

Adeline threw herself into his arms and dried the tears which fell from her eyes.

"My dear," said she, "I will follow your advice; you shall be satisfied with me."

The peasants of the neighborhood, who had learned the disastrous events which had transpired in their benefactor's house during the night, came

hurrying to see him and to assure themselves that he had nothing further to fear. They rendered the last duties to poor Dupré; a tomb was built for him at the foot of the garden, and on the tombstone was inscribed the record of the deplorable manner in which the faithful servant had met his end.

M. Gerval at last wished to know the name of his liberator.

"I am called Jacques, monsieur, formerly a soldier, now a farm laborer."

"Jacques," said the old man; "I bear the same name myself, and gave it also to my godson, a frolicsome child, who should now be about your age, and whom I have vainly sought in Paris."

Jacques looked more attentively at the man whose life they had saved, and recognized in the venerable face the features of a person who had evinced the tenderest interest in him in his youth. A thousand remembrances presented themselves to his mind. He could hardly find strength to ask the good man his name, to which during the disturbing events of the night he had paid no attention.

"My name is Gerval," said the old man, examining him in turn with emotion; "formerly I did business in Paris, where I had a large manufactory."

"Can it be that you are Jacques Gerval, my godfather, whom I have loved so dearly?"

Jacques fell on the neck of the old man, who pressed him tenderly to his bosom, and shed tears of joy at thus recovering his godson; while those who witnessed the scene also wept with sympathy.

"Well now, thousand thunders! see how everyone is found. Here's a recognition that I didn't expect at all — nor you either, comrade."

"My dear Jacques," said M. Gerval, "I have looked for you everywhere; I ardently longed to see you. Your escapade formerly caused me much pain, for, innocently enough, I was author of it. The name of Jacques brought misfortune upon you, my poor godson; it has influenced all your life; your mother neglected you, your father dared not pronounce your name before her; I alone caressed you, but that did not suffice your sensitive heart. You left the paternal roof, and I swore to repair your parents' injustice if I ever could find you. You are here at last. Ah, I know you well now; these scars have not changed the expression of your features. We will never leave each other again, Jacques; you shall close my eyes; you are my child, my only heir. From now on my fortune belongs to you; dispose of it in doing good to all those whom you love."

Jacques kissed his old godfather again; he could not believe his good fortune.

"Dear Adeline," said he at last, "ah, if I am rich you shall never feel poverty; that is the sweetest thought that my fortune gives me."

The old man embraced in turn Adeline and Ermance.

"This is your sister and your niece," he said to Jacques. "Are you married?"

"No," responded Jacques with embarrassment; "this is my brother's wife and daughter."

"Your brother — But then, what has become of him?"

"He is no more. Alas! I have no longer a brother; she has no longer a husband."

"My dears, I have caused you to shed tears; I have, without meaning to do so, reawakened your sorrows. Forgive me. The remembrance of Edouard is painful to you, but I am uninformed in regard to your misfortunes; tell me all about them, and in the future I will try to make you forget them."

Jacques undertook to tell the old man a part of Adeline's sorrows; but he did not make known all his brother's conduct, and M. Gerval believed that Edouard had died in Paris in poverty, after abandoning his wife and child, and that it was the news of her husband's miserable end that had disturbed Adeline's reason.

The good old man felt himself more than ever inclined to love this young woman, a model for wives and mothers; and he was extremely anxious to make the acquaintance of the people at the farm who had shown so much attachment to Jacques and Adeline.

"That's very easy," said Sans-Souci; "if you wish to make everyone happy, you must go to the farm. The deuce! when they see madame and my comrade, I am sure that Louise and Guillot will be happier than if their farm was a château."

"Let us go to the farm," said the good Gerval; "let us go there, my children; the journey will do us good; it will distract my dear Adeline, it will amuse her little Ermance. Jacques can in his turn be useful to those who have aided him in his poverty; and we, my poor Catherine, will try, in the midst of these good people at the farm, to grieve less for our poor Dupré."

The house in the Vosges was let to a villager who converted it into an inn, which had become much needed by persons travelling in those cantons. M. Gerval and his servants left the dwelling with hearts depressed by the remembrance of Dupré; Jacques and Adeline turned their faces from the place which had witnessed Edouard's infamy, and Sans-Souci still looked with pride around the room where he had saved an old man and dealt out death to two scoundrels.

CHAPTER XII

The Garden Gate Again

Sans-Souci insisted on mounting beside the postilion, although M. Gerval was urgent that he should take his place in the carriage; but he was anxious to do everything in his power to watch over the old gentleman and Adeline, fearing they might have to traverse bad and rutty roads. His joy was so great at returning to the farm accompanied by Madame Murville that the good fellow felt it his duty to prevent any accident which might stop them on the way, and at last they yielded to his insistence and allowed him to follow his inclination.

During the journey Jacques related to his old godfather the adventures of his youth; the history of the love philtres and the magnetic séances amused the good Gerval, and even drew a smile from Adeline.

"What fortunate chance led you and your brave companion to our house in the very nick of time to save us from the robbers?" asked old Catherine of Jacques.

"Some days after the departure of my dear Adeline," said Jacques, "seeing that she did not

return to the farm, and believing with reason that she had met with some sad adventure, I started with Sans-Souci, resolved to travel all over France, if it were necessary, to find the mother and baby. We went to Paris and stayed there several days without any success; I could learn nothing as to the fate of those for whom I was looking. After going to bid farewell to the good Guillot and his wife, we again started, and we have successively visited many parts of France. We stopped in the smallest burgs, in the most modest hamlets, gathering the minutest information, and always deceived in our hopes. More than a year had rolled by and our search had been vain. However, Sans-Souci, with that gayety which never deserts him, sustained my courage and reanimated my hope when he saw my sadness and disappointment increase. At length we turned our steps toward this part of the country, knowing not if we should be more fortunate, and after traversing a part of Franche-Comté, we plunged into the Vosges. As we had no fear of robbers, we oftentimes travelled by night, and more often still we slept upon the ground, not always finding a place of shelter on our way. Yesterday, however, the weather was so bad and the snow had so greatly obstructed the roads that we took to the woods. I was chilled by the cold and very much fatigued, when Sans-Souci perceived that we were near a house of respectable appearance. I dared not ask hospitality; he

wished, on the contrary, that we should stop there, and we were discussing our opinions on the subject, when we heard cries from inside the house. We hesitated no longer; I rang the bell of the gate loudly; Sans-Souci noticed a window on the groundfloor open and with the bars broken. We jumped into the room. Judge of my surprise and my joy on finding those whom I had been seeking for so long a time, and from whom I should have been separated perhaps forever, had not your shouts attracted me to the house."

"My dear Jacques, it was well that Providence sent you to our house," said M. Gerval; "but the greatest miracle is that this event has restored our dear Adeline's reason."

"But, monsieur," said Catherine, "isn't that what I told you? Nothing was necessary but a great shock, a crisis; and that is exactly what has happened."

They had a pleasant journey, and in due time arrived at Guillot's farm. Jacques experienced a sweet pleasure in passing through the fields which he had cultivated.

"Here," said he to the good Gerval, "is the plough with which I worked this land, often dripping with perspiration."

"My friend," answered the old man, "never forget it, even in the midst of fortune, and the poor will never ask of you in vain."

A coach with four horses is a great event in the

country. The villagers gathered together, the laborers left their work, the farm people came curiously to look at the travellers; but Sans-Souci's voice was already heard; he snapped his whip so loudly that the fowls flew into their coops, while the pigeons took refuge on the highest chimney.

"It's us! it's he! it's she!" he cried, as far off as he could see Louise and Guillot. "Make a grand feast, with some cabbage soup and a little white wine. Death to the rabbits and pullets!"

The villagers surrounded the carriage; Adeline and Ermance were welcomed, kissed, hugged, by each one. Louise wept and Guillot uttered loud exclamations of joy. The old man was touched by the sincere friendship which everyone evinced for his children; for it was thus he called Jacques, Adeline and her daughter, whom they led in triumph to the farm, where everything was soon upside down to celebrate the return of those whom they had had no hope of seeing again.

In the midst of the joy, the disorder, the preparations for the meal, Sans-Souci ran to everyone to lend his aid. He broke plates, upset saucepans, and cried again and again,—

"You do not know all; Jacques is rich now. This good man is his godfather; we saved him. Oh, I will tell you all about it."

"Ah, come now," said Guillot; "it seems to me that matters have turned out very well; but our friend Jacques' brother?"

"Hush!" said Sans-Souci, putting his hand on the other's mouth; "if you should unfortunately mention him gayety will disappear, tears will return, and they won't care a straw for your meal; you had better, believe me, turn your tongue in your mouth for an hour rather than to say something stupid on that subject."

"That's sufficient," said Guillot; "I will think before speaking at the table."

The sojourn at the farm pleased the good Gerval; he walked about the neighborhood, admiring the charming points of view, the fertile lands which surrounded it.

"Hang it, monsieur," said Guillot, "if you could know how pretty all this is in summer — the deuce! you can't see anything at present; but if our fields are more valuable, if our land is more productive, I owe it to our friend Jacques. In two years he has done more, thought of more, than I have in six; he alone was worth three workers. It's a great pity that he should be rich, for it deprives me of a good laborer."

"My dear Jacques," said the old man, "you should love this country, these fields, which testify to your good work; it would be cruel of me to separate you from these places. We will settle ourselves here; I commission you to buy a pretty property in this neighborhood; arrange it all; I am too old to trouble myself about business, and I can trust you to make a good choice."

Jacques joyfully accepted the commission intrusted to him; he had already formed a plan, and the day after his arrival, led by a secret hope, he went in the morning to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges. He tremblingly approached his father's house; his greatest desire was to pass the rest of his life in that dwelling which recalled to him memories both sad and sweet.

He drew near the gate; a writing was pasted on the wall which read, "House for sale or to let."

"We shall get it!" cried he; "I shall again reside in this dwelling where I passed my infancy. I left it at fifteen years old; I come back to it at thirty, no more to leave it. Adeline, I am certain of it, will be pleased to find herself here again, for here it was, she has told me, that she passed the happiest days of her life. If this dwelling recalls to her the man whom she has loved too well, at least while they lived here he was still worthy of her."

Jacques rang the bell; nobody answered, but a neighbor advised him to go to the lawyer who lived nearly opposite. This lawyer was the same who, four years previously, had made the deed of sale for Edouard Murville. The house, since being seized and sold by the creditors, had passed successively into several hands. The one who now owned it seldom lived there and was very anxious to get rid of it. Jacques inquired the price, and promised to return the next day to complete the

business. He hastened to return to the farm, and the old man saw by his look of satisfaction that he had found a house which pleased him.

"You know it," said Jacques to him; "you have often been there formerly, for it is the house which belonged to my father."

"And you didn't conclude the matter? Come, I see it is necessary for me to go myself to finish this business."

In fact, the next day the old man started in his carriage with his dear godson for the lawyer's and bought the house in the name of Jacques, for he knew that the latter would never bear any other name; and the good Gerval did not demand an explanation because he divined that this was due to Edouard's crimes.

"Wait, my boy," said he to Jacques, when presenting him the deed; "it is quite time that I should make you a present to indemnify you for having given you so ugly a name. This property belongs to you, and my little Jacques is in his own home, at the dwelling from which his name formerly caused him to flee."

Jacques kissed the old man, and they returned to the farm to seek Adeline and her daughter.

"Am I a bad judge of your heart," said Jacques to his sister-in-law, "in thinking it will give you pleasure to live again in the pretty house at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges?"

"No, my dear," answered Adeline; "I have

been so happy in that house that I desire to pass my life there. The remembrance of the joy I experienced there sometimes mingled with my sad thoughts; I will discard from my mind all that he did after leaving there, and will try to preserve the memory only of the days of his love; then I can at least weep for him without blushing."

Guillot's family learned with much joy that their friends would not leave them; for the road from the farm to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges was but a pleasant walk, and they promised to visit one another often during the summer.

Four days after their arrival our travellers left the farm to install themselves in their new dwelling. Adeline's eyes filled with tears when she found herself again in that house, when she saw again those gardens where she had passed the first months of her marriage,—months so sweet, which passed so quickly and never returned.

Catherine took possession of the kitchen, Lucas of the garden, also fulfilling the duties of a porter; M. Gerval chose apartments between those of Jacques and Adeline, that those he loved might be near him. Ermance remained near her mother, to enliven her with her prattle, to charm her by her kisses, and to mingle hope with her memories.

Sans-Souci wished to return to his work at the farm, but M. Gerval and Jacques objected to it.

"You have saved my life," said M. Gerval to him; "I do not wish you ever to leave me."

"You have shared my sorrows and my poverty," said Jacques to him; "you shall share my good fortune; everything is in common between us."

"Hang it all," said Sans-Souci, passing his hand over his eyes, "these people here do what they will with me. I'll stay with you with all my heart, but on condition that I may go out walking when you see company, and that I need not come to the table with Madame Adeline, because it is necessary to show respect for one's superiors, and because I am as stupid as a goose in society."

"You shall go and walk as much as you please," said the old man to him; "you shall hunt, you shall fish, and you shall smoke, if that will please you; but you must sit at the table with us, because a brave man is out of place nowhere."

"Come — thousand cartridges! — Well, if it's necessary I shall have to do it."

No more adventures, no more storms, no more misfortunes; the days passed peacefully at last for the inhabitants of Villeneuve-Saint-Georges. Adeline experienced only a soft melancholy, which the graces and caresses of her charming daughter rendered supportable. Young Ermance grew and improved; her disposition was amiable, lovable, her voice gentle, like her mother's, and her heart sensitive and generous, never repulsing the unfortunate. Jacques, proud of his niece, had mollified his manners since he had lived in the bosom of

his family; Sans-Souci still swore, and would go through fire for his friends; M. Gerval was made doubly happy by the good he did himself and that which he saw Jacques do; everybody lived peacefully at length, and the dwellers at the farm often visited those at the village.

The only thing that disturbed the happiness of Sans-Souci was the fact that Jacques never wore the decoration he had earned on the field of battle.

"Why do you no longer carry it?" he said to him when they were alone; "what can prevent you? Hang it! you have no common sense with your resolutions."

"My brother has dishonored our name."

"Well, was it to you or to your name they gave the cross?"

"Respect for this honorable decoration forbids me to wear it."

"But nobody calls you anything but Jacques."

"No matter; I've not worn it since Edouard was on — Ah, wait; that frightful remembrance makes me blush for the mark of honor. I will wear it no longer."

"You are wrong."

"Possibly. I have, and I always shall have, the honor; but I am no longer proud of it when I remember my brother's shame."

The peace enjoyed by the dwellers in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges was disturbed by an event which everyone believed far off; the good Gerval

fell sick, and died in spite of the assiduous care which they all lavished upon him in the hope of saving him.

"My children," he said to them in his last moments, "I leave you with regret; but at least I am assured of your fate. I hoped to have lived among you for a long time; destiny has ordered otherwise, and we must submit to it. Think of me, but do not weep for me."

The old man left his fortune to Jacques and Adeline, — an income of thirty thousand livres, a part of which he had employed in assisting the unfortunate. Old Catherine only survived her master a few months, and these events for a long time had a depressing influence on the dwellers in the house of Jacques.

But time assuages the bitterest regrets; it triumphs over all; it is the Lethe which swallows the memory of our sorrows and our joys.

The years passed. Ermance was nine years old, and made the happiness of Jacques and the consolation of her mother. That they might not be separated from her, they brought to the village a governess, who commenced her education.

"Thousand carbines!" said Sans-Souci, looking at the little girl, "that little face will devilishly turn some heads. Wit, beauty, grace, talent, — she has them all, hang it!"

"Yes," said Jacques; "but she can never mention her father."

"Mon Dieu! there are a good many people in the same case, but that won't prevent your niece from having her love affairs."

"Hang it! love is the misfortune of life; it would please me much better if she never experienced it."

"Oh, she won't ask your permission about it, comrade."

Adeline was proud of her daughter, who developed the most cheerful disposition, and made the most rapid progress in all they taught her.

"Dear Ermance," she said in a low tone while looking at her, "may you be happier than your parents!"

Adeline at that moment thought of Edouard, whom she believed had long since died in poverty and despair.

"Ah," she said sometimes to Jacques, when their eyes expressed the same thought, "if I could only believe that he repented before he died, I feel it would afford me some slight consolation."

Jacques did not answer, but called Ermance and led her to Adeline, that the sight of her might divert her mother's mind from the fatal remembrance. He did not know that a mother sees ever in her child the image of him she loves.

One evening in the summer time, Jacques was walking wrapped in pensive thought at the foot of the garden; Ermance amused herself picking flowers not far from her uncle; and Adeline, seated

on a grassy bank, silently contemplated her daughter's infantile graces. Suddenly Ermance, who was going toward a bush covered with roses, stopped, and uttered a cry of alarm. Adeline ran toward her child, and Jacques also drew near, each one inquiring the cause of her fright.

"There! there!" replied the young girl, pointing with her finger toward the end of the garden. "Look! he is still there. Ah, that face frightened me."

Jacques and Adeline looked in the direction indicated by Ermance and perceived behind the little iron gate covered with boards, at the same place where she had formerly seen the mustached visage, the face of a man who was also looking into the garden.

"What a singular coincidence!" said Adeline, looking at Jacques. "My dear, do you remember that, ten years ago, you appeared before me in that same place?"

"So I did. Yes, I remember it very well."

"We must excuse Ermance's fear, for I remember that you frightened me very much then. This man appears distressed.—Come, my daughter; let us go and offer him our assistance and drive away your fear."

While saying these words Adeline, with Ermance, went toward the little gate. The features of the man behind it seemed to become more animated; he glanced attentively at Adeline and the

little girl, then turned his regards on Jacques, and, passing his arm through the bars into the garden, seemed to implore their pity. Adeline was now near the gate; she looked at the mendicant; she uttered a mournful cry, and then turned toward Jacques, pale, startled, trembling, and, speaking with difficulty, said,—

"I know not if it be an illusion; but this man,—he seems to me— Yes, it is he;—it is—"

She could say no more. Jacques ran to the little gate, he recognized his brother, and opened it. Edouard came into the garden covered with rags and tatters, spent with fatigue and suffering, and presenting a dreadful image of poverty and despair.

"Help me! save me!" said he, drawing near Jacques, who hardly dared to believe his eyes. "Oh! in pity don't repulse me."

"O mamma! let us go; this man frightens me," said Ermance, pressing close to her mother.

Adeline, motionless, looked at Edouard; the tears rolled down her cheeks and fell on her child's face.

"Unhappy man!" said Jacques at last; "what object had you in coming here? Will you pursue us everywhere? Must your infamy overshadow your family and make this innocent child blush?"

Edouard did not answer, but he looked at Adeline, who hid her child's face in her bosom.

"Oh!" said he at last, precipitating himself at

Jacques' feet, "see how wretched I am. They even hide my child's face from me; they shield her from her father's glance."

Jacques had not the strength to repulse him; Edouard approached Adeline, threw himself at her feet, bowed his forehead to the ground and sobbed bitterly. Ermance turned her eyes toward him; her fear gave way to pity.

"Mamma," said she to Adeline, "this poor man seems very unhappy; it makes me sorry for him. Let me help him to get up; I feel that I am no longer afraid of him."

Edouard seized one of his little girl's hands and pressed it tenderly between his own. He looked expressively at Adeline, and she understood him.

"I forgive you," she said to him. "If you had offended me only; but this child, my daughter, — she can never mention you — "

Jacques interrupted Adeline by putting a finger on his lips. At this moment Sans-Souci ran toward them and exhibited much surprise on seeing the stranger in the garden.

"What do you want with us?" said Jacques. "Why are you running so hastily? What has happened?"

"My faith, comrade, I came to say that some gendarmes are in the village; they are seeking a vagabond as traced to these premises, and they are coming very soon to visit this house. I told them

that it would be of no use, but, hang it all, I didn't know that — "

"Hush! be silent," said Jacques; "not a word of what you have seen here. — Go to the house with that child, sister; go, and fear nothing; I will attend to everything. — Sans-Souci, lead my sister in, and, above all, preserve the most rigid silence."

Sans-Souci swore to keep silence and withdrew some paces, highly astonished at all that he had seen. Adeline was terrified at the dangers which menaced Edouard, but he himself implored her to abandon him to his unhappy lot. He pressed her hand to his heart, kissed his child's hand and left them, while, at a sign from Jacques, Sans-Souci led Adeline and Ermance toward the house.

"They are gone and we are alone," said Jacques to his brother when Adeline was lost to their sight; "is it you whom the soldiers are after?"

"Yes. A little distance from here, in an inn which I entered to beg for help, a man, formerly a jailer of prisoners at Toulon, was there drinking at a table; he looked at me attentively; I departed, fearing to be recognized, but I see it was too late; my fate is certain. However, I am not so wretched as I was; I have seen my daughter, my wife has forgiven me, and you — oh, my brother, I pray you forgive me also."

"Yes," said Jacques, "I will forgive you; but it is necessary — Do you not know that capital

punishment awaits you? You will perish on the scaffold, and the knowledge of your infamous death will be our eternal shame. Have you, then, courage only for the commission of crime? and do you not know how to do that which you might have done long since, to protect the honor of your wife and your child? You are trembling; feeble man, you will await the executioners; remember that you cannot avoid being retaken by the hands of justice. Great God! and you are not weary of an existence dragged on in such poverty and infamy?"

"I understand," said Edouard. "Ah, believe me, death will be more than welcome to me; but I wish, before I go down to the grave, to assure you of my repentance. Now give me the means of escaping capital punishment; I will hesitate no longer."

Jacques signed to Edouard to wait. He went quickly to his closet and, taking his pistols, returned to the garden, where he found Edouard on his knees near the little iron gate. He presented the weapons to him with a steady hand and Edouard seized them.

"Now," said Jacques, "come, my poor brother, and kiss me for the last time. Your brother forgives your crimes, and every day he will come to your grave to implore Heaven's pardon for you."

Edouard threw himself into his brother's arms and held him for a long time in his embrace, but at last he disengaged himself and withdrew a few

paces; the shot sped; the miserable man was no more.

Jacques drew near his brother's body, and, while shedding bitter tears, he nerved himself to begin hastily to dig a grave at the foot of a willow which stood against the little iron gate. Sans-Souci surprised him in this sad occupation.

"Help me," said Jacques; "it is my brother."

Sans-Souci begged his friend to leave the painful task to him, but Jacques would not consent to that. He wished to render the last duties to his brother; and it was not until the earth had hidden Edouard from his sight that he would consent to return to Adeline.

"Well," she said to him, "what has become of him?"

"Fear nothing more for him," sadly responded Jacques; "he is saved; and now I assure you that justice can never overtake him."

Adeline, relying on Jacques' assurance, was not at all alarmed when some hours later the gendarmes visited the house, where of course they did not find Edouard.

Some time had elapsed, when Adeline was surprised at the sight of a funereal monument which Jacques had had placed under a willow at the foot of the garden.

"For whom is this tombstone?" she asked him.

"For my unhappy brother."

"Can he be dead?"